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THE HAWORTH EDITION

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF
CHARLOTTE BRONTË
AND HER SISTERS

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THE LIFE AND WORKS OF
CHARLOTTE BRONTË
AND HER SISTERS

IN SEVEN VOLUMES

WITH INTRODUCTIONS TO THE WORKS
BY MRS HUMPHRY WARD
AND AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES TO THE LIFE
BY CLEMENT K. SHORTER

VOLUME IV
THE PROFESSOR BY CHARLOTTE BRONTË
ETC.

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1922

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CRIMSWORTH HALL.

THE PROFESSOR

BY CHARLOTTE BRONTË

AND

POEMS

BY CHARLOTTE, EMILY, AND ANNE BRONTË AND THE REV. PATRICK BRONTË, ETC.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY MRS HUMPHRY WARD

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1922

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INTRODUCTION

It is in April 1846 that we discover a first mention of 'The Professor' in a letter from Charlotte Brontë to Messrs. Aylott & Jones, the publishers of the little volume of 'Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell' which made its modest appearance in that year. Miss Brontë consults Messrs. Aylott & Co. 'on behalf of C. E. and A. Bell' as to how they can best publish three tales already written by them—whether in three connected volumes or separately. The advice given was no doubt prudent and friendly,—but it did not help 'The Professor.' The story went fruitlessly to many publishers. It returned to Charlotte, from one of its later quests, on the very morning of the day on which Mr. Brontë underwent an operation for cataract at Manchester—August 25, 1846. That evening, as we have seen, she began 'Jane Eyre.'

After the great success of the first two books, she would have liked to publish 'The Professor.' But Mr. Smith and Mr. Williams dissuaded her; and to their dissuasion we owe 'Villette'; for if 'The Professor' had appeared in 1851, Miss Brontë could have made no such further use of her Brussels materials as she did actually put them to in ‘Villette.’ The story was finally published after the writer’s death, and when the strong interest excited by Mrs. Gaskell’s Memoir led naturally to a demand for all that could yet be given to the public from the hand of Currer Bell.

There is little to add to the writer’s own animated preface. As she herself points out. the book is by no means the book of a novice. It was written in the author’s thirtieth year, after a long apprenticeship to the art of writing. Those innumerable tales, poems, and essays, composed in childhood and youth, of which Mrs. Gaskell and Mr. Shorter between them give accounts so suggestive and remarkable, were the natural and right foundation for all that followed. ‘The Professor’ shows already a method of composition almost mature, a pronounced manner, and the same power of analysis, within narrower limits, as the other books. What it lacks is colour and movement. Crimsworth as the lonely and struggling teacher, is inevitably less interesting—described, at any rate, by a woman—than Lucy Snowe under the same conditions, and in the same surroundings. His *rôle* is not particularly manly; and he does not appeal to our pity. The intimate autobiographical note, which makes the spell of ‘Villette,’ is absent; we miss the passionate moods and caprices, all the perennial charm of variable woman, which belongs to the later story. There are, besides, no vicissitudes in the plot. Crimsworth suffers nothing to speak of; he wins his Frances too easily; and the reader’s emotions are left unstirred.

Mademoiselle Reuter is Madame Beck over again, but at once less credible and less complex. Pelet is an extremely clever sketch. And Hunsden?

Hunsden is really the critical element in the story. If he were other than he is, 'The Professor' would have stood higher in the scale. For the conception of him is both ambitious and original. But it breaks down. He puzzles us; and yet he is not mysterious. For that he is not human enough. In the end we find him merely brutal and repellent, and the letter to Crimsworth, which accompanies the gift of the picture, is one of those extravagances which destroy a reader's sense of illusion. Great pains have been taken with him; and when he enters he promises much; but he is never truly living for a single page, and half way through the book he has already become a mere bundle of incredibilities. Let the reader put him beside Mr. Helstone of 'Shirley,' beside even Rochester, not to speak of Dr. John or Monsieur Paul, and so realise the difference between imagination working at ease, in happy and vitalising strength, and the same faculty toiling unprofitably and half-heartedly with material which it can neither fuse nor master. There is pungency and power in much of Hunsden's talk; but it is not a pungency or power that can save him as a creation.

On the other hand, Frances Henri, the little lace-mender, is a figure touched at every point with grace, feeling and truth. She is an exquisite sketch—a drawing in pale, pure colour, all delicate animation and soft life. She is only inferior to Caroline Helstone, because the range of emotion and incident that her story requires is so much narrower than that which Caroline passes through. One feels her thrown away on 'The Professor.' An ampler stage and a warmer air should have been reserved for her; adventures more subtly invented; and a lover less easily victorious. But the scene in which she makes tea for Crimsworth—so at least one thinks as one reads it—could hardly be surpassed for fresh and tender charm; although when the same material is used again for the last scenes of 'Villette,' it is not hard to see how the flame and impetus of a great book may still heighten and deepen what was already excellent before.

'The Professor' indeed is grey and featureless compared with any of Charlotte Brontë's other work. The final impression is that she was working under restraint when writing it, and that her proper gifts were consciously denied full play in it. In the preface of 1851, she says, as an explanation of the sobriety of the story —'In many a crude effort destroyed almost as soon as composed, I had got over any such taste as I might once have had for ornamented and redundant composition, and come to prefer what was plain and homely.' In other words, she was putting herself under discipline in 'The Professor'; trying to subdue the poetical impulse; to work as a realist and an observer only.

According to her own account of it, the publishers interfered with this process. They would not have 'The Professor'; and they welcomed 'Jane Eyre' with alacrity. She was therefore thrown back, so to speak, upon her faults; obliged to work in ways more 'ornamented' and 'redundant'; and thus the promise of realism in her was destroyed. The explanation is one of those which the artist will always supply himself with on occasion. In truth, the method of 'The Professor' represents a mere temporary reaction,—an experiment—in Charlotte Brontë's literary development. When she returned to that exuberance of imagination and expression which was her natural utterance, she was not merely writing to please her publishers and the public. Rather it was like Emily's passionate return to the moorland—

> I'll walk where my own nature would be leading,
> It vexes me to choose another guide:

The strong native bent reasserted itself, and with the happiest effects.

But because of what came after, and because the mental history of a great and delightful artist will always appeal to the affectionate curiosity of later generations, 'The Professor' will continue to be read both by those who love Charlotte Brontë, and by those who find pleasure in tracking the processes of literature. It needs no apology as a separate entity; but from its relation to 'Villette' it gains an interest and importance the world would not otherwise have granted it. It is the first revelation of a genius which from each added throb of happiness or sorrow, from each short after-year of strenuous living,—*per damna, per cædes*—was to gain fresh wealth, and steadily advancing power.

MARY A. WARD.

Facsimile of the Title-page of the First Edition.

THE PROFESSOR,

A Tale.

BY

CURRER BELL,

AUTHOR OF "JANE EYRE," "SHIRLEY." "VILLETTE," &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER & CO., 65, CORNHILL.

1857.

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THE PROFESSOR

BY

CURRER BELL

PREFACE TO 'THE PROFESSOR'

This little book was written before either 'Jane Eyre' or 'Shirley,' and yet no indulgence can be solicited for it on the plea of a first attempt. A first attempt it certainly was not, as the pen which wrote it had been previously worn a good deal in a practice of some years. I had not indeed published anything before I commenced 'The Professor,' but in many a crude effort, destroyed almost as soon as composed, I had got over any such taste as I might once have had for ornamented and redundant composition, and come to prefer what was plain and homely. At the same time I had adopted a set of principles on the subject of incident, &c., such as would be generally approved in theory, but the result of which, when carried out into practice, often procures for an author more surprise than pleasure.

I said to myself that my hero should work his way through life as I had seen real living men work theirs— that he should never get a shilling he had not earned—that no sudden turns should lift him in a moment to wealth and high station; that whatever small competency he might gain, should be won by the sweat of his brow; that, before he could find so much as an arbour to sit down in, he should master at least half the ascent of 'the Hill of Difficulty'; that he should not even marry a beautiful girl or a lady of rank. As Adam's son he should share Adam's doom, and drain throughout life a mixed and moderate cup of enjoyment.

In the sequel, however, I find that publishers in general scarcely approved of this system, but would have liked something more imaginative and poetical—something more consonant with a highly-wrought fancy, with a taste for pathos, with sentiments more tender, elevated, unworldly. Indeed, until an author has tried to dispose of a manuscript of this kind, he can never know what stores of romance and sensibility lie hidden in breasts he would not have suspected of casketing such treasures. Men in business are usually thought to prefer the real; on trial the idea will be often found fallacious: a passionate preference for the wild, wonderful, and thrilling—the strange, startling, and harrowing—agitates divers souls that show a calm and sober surface.

Such being the case, the reader will comprehend that to have reached him in the form of a printed book, this brief narrative must have gone through some struggles—which indeed it has. And after all, its worst struggle and strongest ordeal is yet to come; but it takes comfort—subdues fear—leans on the staff of a moderate expectation—and mutters under its breath, while lifting its eye to that of the public,

He that is low need fear no fall.

Currer Bell.

The foregoing preface was written by my wife with a view to the publication of 'The Professor,' shortly after the appearance of 'Shirley.' Being dissuaded from her intention, the authoress made some use of the materials in a subsequent work—'Villette.' As, however, these two stories are in most respects unlike, it has been represented to me that I ought not to withhold 'The Professor' from the public. I have therefore consented to its publication.

A. B. Nicholls.

Haworth Parsonage,
September 22nd, 1856.

THE PROFESSOR

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE other day, in looking over my papers, I found in my desk the following copy of a letter, sent by me a year since to an old school acquaintance:—

'DEAR CHARLES,—

'I THINK, when you and I were at Eton together, we were neither of us what could be called popular characters: you were a sarcastic, observant, shrewd, cold-blooded creature; my own portrait I will not attempt to draw, but I cannot recollect that it was a strikingly attractive one—can you? What animal magnetism drew thee and me together I know not; certainly I never experienced anything of the Pylades and Orestes sentiment for you, and I have reason to believe that you, on your part, were equally free from all romantic regard to me. Still, out of school-hours we walked and talked continually together; when the theme of conversation was our companions or our masters we understood each other, and when I recurred to some sentiment of affection, some vague love of an excellent or beautiful object, whether in animate or inanimate nature, your sardonic coldness did not move me. I felt myself superior to that check *then* as I do *now*.

'It is a long time since I wrote to you, and a still longer time since I saw you. Chancing to take up a newspaper of your county the other day, my eye fell upon your name. I began to think of old times; to run over the events which have transpired since we separated; and I sat down and commenced this letter. What you have been doing I know not; but you shall hear, if you choose to listen, how the world has wagged with me.

'First, after leaving Eton, I had an interview with my maternal uncles, Lord Tynedale and the Hon. John Seacombe. They asked me if I would enter the Church, and my uncle the nobleman offered me the living of Seacombe, which is in his gift, if I would; then my other uncle, Mr. Seacombe, hinted that when I became rector of Seacombe-cum-Scaife, I might perhaps be allowed to take, as mistress of my house and head of my parish, one of my six cousins, his daughters, all of whom I greatly dislike.

'I declined both the Church and matrimony. A good clergyman is a good thing, but I should have made a very bad one. As to the wife—oh, how like a nightmare is the thought of being bound for life to one of my cousins! No doubt they are accomplished and pretty; but not an accomplishment, not a charm of theirs, touches a chord in my bosom. To think of passing the winter evenings by the parlour fireside of Seacombe Rectory alone with one of them—for instance, the large and well-modelled statue, Sarah—no; I should be a bad husband, under such circumstances, as well as a bad clergyman.

'When I had declined my uncles' offers they asked me "what I intended to do?" I said I should reflect. They reminded me that I had no fortune, and no expectation of any, and, after a considerable pause, Lord Tynedale demanded sternly, "Whether I had thoughts of following my father's steps and engaging in trade?" Now, I had had no thoughts of the sort. I do not think that my turn of mind qualifies me to make a good tradesman; my taste, my ambition does not lie in that way; but such was the scorn expressed in Lord Tynedale's countenance as he pronounced the word *trade*—such the contemptuous sarcasm of his tone—that I was instantly decided. My father was but a name to me, yet that name I did not like to hear mentioned with a sneer to my very face. I answered then, with haste and warmth, "I cannot do better than follow in my father's steps; yes, I will be a tradesman." My uncles did not remonstrate; they and I parted with mutual disgust. In reviewing this transaction, I find that I was quite right to shake off the burden of Tynedale's patronage, but a fool to offer my shoulders instantly for the reception of another burden—one which might be more intolerable, and which certainly was yet untried.

'I wrote instantly to Edward—you know Edward—my only brother, ten years my senior, married to a rich mill-owner's daughter, and now possessor of the mill and business which was my father's before he failed. You are aware that my father—once reckoned a Crœsus of wealth—became bankrupt a short time previous to his death, and that my mother lived in destitution for some six months after him, unhelped by her aristocratical brothers, whom she had mortally offended by her union with Crimsworth, the ——shire manufacturer. At the end of the six months she brought me into the world, and then herself left it without, I should think, much regret, as it contained little hope or comfort for her.

'My father's relations took charge of Edward, as they did of me, till I was nine years old. At that period it chanced that the representation of an important borough in our county fell vacant; Mr. Seacombe stood for it. My uncle Crimsworth, an astute mercantile man, took the opportunity of writing a fierce letter to the candidate, stating that if he and Lord Tynedale did not consent to do something towards the support of their sister's orphan children, he would expose their relentless and malignant conduct towards that sister, and do his best to turn the circumstances against Mr. Seacombe's election. That gentleman and Lord T. knew well enough that the Crimsworths were an unscrupulous and determined race; they knew also that they had influence in the borough of X——; and, making a virtue of necessity, they consented to defray the expenses of my education. I was sent to Eton, where I remained ten years, during which space of time Edward and I never met. He, when he grew up, entered into trade, and pursued his calling with such diligence, ability, and success, that now, in his thirtieth year, he was fast making a fortune. Of this I was apprised by the occasional short letters I received from him, some three or four times a year; which said letters never concluded without some expression of determined enmity against the house of Seacombe, and some reproach to me for living, as he said, on the bounty of that house. At first, while still in boyhood, I could not understand why, as I had no parents, I should not be indebted to my uncles Tynedale and Seacombe for my education; but as I grew up, and heard by degrees of the persevering hostility, the hatred till death evinced by them against my father—of the sufferings of my mother—of all the wrongs, in short, of our house—then did I conceive shame of the dependence in which I lived, and form a resolution no more to take bread from hands which had refused to minister to the necessities of my dying mother. It was by these feelings I was influenced when I refused the Rectory of Seacombe, and the union with one of my patrician cousins.

'An irreparable breach thus being effected between my uncles and myself, I wrote to Edward; told him what had occurred, and informed him of my intention to follow his steps and be a tradesman. I asked, moreover, if he could give me employment. His answer expressed no approbation of my conduct, but he said I might come down to ——shire, if I liked, and he would "see what could be done in the way of furnishing me with work." I repressed all—even *mental* comment on his note—packed my trunk and carpet-bag, and started for the North directly.

'After two days' travelling (railroads were not then in existence), I arrived, one wet October afternoon, in the town of X——. I had always understood that Edward lived in this town, but on inquiry I found that it was only Mr. Crimsworth's mill and warehouse which were situated in the smoky atmosphere of Bigben Close; his *residence* lay four miles out, in the country.

'It was late in the evening when I alighted at the gates of the habitation designated to me as my brother's. As I advanced up the avenue, I could see through the shades of twilight, and the dark gloomy mists which deepened those shades, that the house was large, and the grounds surrounding it sufficiently spacious. I paused a moment on the lawn in front, and leaning my back against a tall tree which rose in the centre, I gazed with interest on the exterior of Crimsworth Hall.

'"Edward is rich," thought I to myself. "I believed him to be doing well—but I did not know he was master of a mansion like this." Cutting short all marvelling, speculation, conjecture, &c., I advanced to the front door and rang. A man-servant opened it—I announced myself—he relieved me of my wet cloak and carpet-bag, and ushered me into a room furnished as a library, where there was a bright fire and candles burning on the table; he informed me that his master was not yet returned from X—— market, but that he would certainly be at home in the course of half an hour.

'Being left to myself, I took the stuffed easy chair, covered with red morocco, which stood by the fireside, and while my eyes watched the flames dart from the glowing coals, and the cinders fall at intervals on the hearth, my mind busied itself in conjectures concerning the meeting about to take place.. Amidst much that was doubtful in the subject of these conjectures, there was one thing tolerably certain—I was in no danger of encountering severe disappointment; from this, the moderation of my expectations guaranteed me. I anticipated no overflowings of fraternal tenderness; Edward's letters had always been such as to prevent the engendering or harbouring of delusions of this sort. Still, as I sat awaiting his arrival, I felt eager—very eager—I cannot tell you why; my hand, so utterly a stranger to the grasp of a kindred hand, clenched itself to repress the tremor with which impatience would fain have shaken it.

'I thought of my uncles; and as I was engaged in wondering whether Edward's indifference would equal the cold disdain I had always experienced from them, I heard the avenue gates open: wheels approached the house; Mr. Crimsworth was arrived; and after the lapse of some minutes, and a brief dialogue between himself and his servant in the hall, his tread drew near the library door—that tread alone announced the master of the house.

'I still retained some confused recollection of Edward as he was ten years ago—a tall, wiry, raw youth; *now*, as I rose from my seat and turned towards the library door, I saw a fine-looking and powerful man, light-complexioned, well-made, and of athletic proportions; the first glance made me aware of an air of promptitude and sharpness, shown as well in his movements as in his port, his eye, and the general expression of his face. He greeted me with brevity, and, in the moment of shaking hands, scanned me from head to foot; he took his seat in the morocco-covered arm-chair, and motioned me to another seat.

'"I expected you would have called at the counting-house in the Close," said he; and his voice, I noticed, had an abrupt accent, probably habitual to him; he spoke also with a guttural northern tone, which sounded harsh in my ears, accustomed to the silvery utterance of the South.

'"The landlord of the inn, where the coach stopped, directed me here," said I. "I doubted at first the accuracy of his information, not being aware that you had such a residence as this."

'"Oh, it is all right!" he replied, "only I was kept half an hour behind time, waiting for you—that is all. I thought you must be coming by the eight-o'clock coach."

'I expressed regret that he had had to wait; he made no answer, but stirred the fire, as if to cover a movement of impatience; then he scanned me again.

'I felt an inward satisfaction that I had not, in the first moment of meeting, betrayed any warmth, any enthusiasm; that I had saluted this man with a quiet and steady phlegm.

'"Have you quite broken with Tynedale and Seacombe?" he asked hastily.

'"I do not think I shall have any further communication with them; my refusal of their proposals will, I fancy, operate as a barrier against all future intercourse."

'"Why," said he, "I may as well remind you at the very outset of our connection, that 'no man can serve two masters.' Acquaintance with Lord Tynedale will be incompatible with assistance from me." There was a kind of gratuitous menace in his eye as he looked at me in finishing this observation.

'Feeling no disposition to reply to him, I contented myself with an inward speculation on the differences which exist in the constitution of men's minds. I do not know what inference Mr. Crimsworth drew from my silence—whether he considered it a symptom of contumacity, or an evidence of my being cowed by his peremptory manner. After a long and hard stare at me, he rose sharply from his seat.

'"To-morrow," said he, "I shall call your attention to some other points; but now it is supper-time, and Mrs. Crimsworth is probably waiting: will you come?"

'He strode from the room, and I followed. In crossing the hall, I wondered what Mrs. Crimsworth might be. "Is she," thought I, "as alien to what I like as Tynedale, Seacombe, the Misses Seacombe—as the affectionate relative now striding before me? or is she better than these? Shall I, in conversing with her, feel free to show something of my real nature; or——" Further conjectures were arrested by my entrance into the dining-room.

'A lamp, burning under a shade of ground-glass, showed a handsome apartment, wainscoted with oak; supper was laid on the table; by the fireplace, standing as if waiting our entrance, appeared a lady; she was young, tall, and well shaped; her dress was handsome and fashionable: so much my first glance sufficed to ascertain. A gay salutation passed between her and Mr. Crimsworth; she chid him, half playfully, half poutingly, for being late; her voice (I always take voices into the account in judging of character) was lively—it indicated, I thought, good animal spirits. Mr. Crimsworth soon checked her animated scolding with a kiss—a kiss that still told of the bridegroom (they had not yet been married a year); she took her seat at the supper-table in first-rate spirits. Perceiving me, she begged my pardon for not noticing me before, and then shook hands with me, as ladies do when a flow of good-humour disposes them to be cheerful to all, even the most indifferent of their acquaintance. It was now further obvious to me that she had a good complexion, and features sufficiently marked but agreeable; her hair was red—quite red. She and Edward talked much, always in a vein of playful contention; she was vexed, or pretended to be vexed, that he had that day driven a vicious horse in the gig, and he made light of her fears. Sometimes she appealed to me.

'"Now, Mr. William, isn't it absurd in Edward to talk so? He says he will drive Jack, and no other horse, and the brute has thrown him twice already."

'She spoke with a kind of lisp, not disagreeable, but childish. I soon saw also that there was more than girlish—a somewhat infantine expression in her by no means small features; this lisp and expression were, I have no doubt, a charm in Edward's eyes, and would be so to those of most men, but they were not to mine. I sought her eye, desirous to read there the intelligence which I could not discern in her face or hear in her conversation; it was merry, rather small; by turns I saw vivacity, vanity, coquetry, look out through its irid, but I watched in vain for a glimpse of soul. I am no Oriental; white necks, carmine lips and cheeks, clusters of bright curls, do not suffice for me without that Promethean spark which will live after the roses and lilies are faded, the burnished hair grown grey. In sunshine, in prosperity, the flowers are very well; but how many wet days are there in life—November seasons of disaster, when a man's hearth and home would be cold indeed without the clear, cheering gleam of intellect.

'Having perused the fair page of Mrs. Crimsworth's face, a deep, involuntary sigh announced my disappointment; she took it as a homage to her beauty, and Edward, who was evidently proud of his rich and handsome young wife, threw on me a glance—half ridicule, half ire.

'I turned from them both, and gazing wearily round the room, I saw two pictures set in the oak panelling—one on each side the mantel-piece. Ceasing to take part in the bantering conversation that flowed on between Mr. and Mrs. Crimsworth, I bent my thoughts to the examination of these pictures. They were portraits—a lady and a gentleman, both costumed in the fashion of twenty years ago. The gentleman was in the shade. I could not see him well. The lady had the benefit of a full beam from the softly-shaded lamp. I presently recognised her; I had seen this picture before in childhood; it was my mother; that and the companion picture being the only heirlooms saved out of the sale of my father's property.

'The face, I remembered, had pleased me as a boy, but *then* I did not understand it; *now* I knew how rare that class of face is in the world, and I appreciated keenly its thoughtful, yet gentle expression. The serious grey eye possessed for me a strong charm, as did certain lines in the features indicative of most true and tender feeling. I was sorry it was only a picture.

'I soon left Mr. and Mrs. Crimsworth to themselves; a servant conducted me to my bed-room; in closing my chamber-door, I shut out all intruders—you, Charles, as well as the rest.

'Good-by for the present,
'WILLIAM CRIMSWORTH.'

To this letter I never got an answer; before my old friend received it, he had accepted a Government appointment in one of the colonies, and was already on his way to the scene of his official labours. What has become of him since, I know not.

The leisure time I have at command, and which I intended to employ for his private benefit, I shall now dedicate to that of the public at large. My narrative is not exciting, and above all, not marvellous; but it may interest some individuals, who, having toiled in the same vocation as myself, will find in my experience frequent reflections of their own. The above letter will serve as an introduction. I now proceed.

CHAPTER II

A FINE October morning succeeded to the foggy evening that had witnessed my first introduction to Crimsworth Hall. I was early up and walking in the large park-like meadow surrounding the house. The autumn sun, rising over the ——shire hills, disclosed a pleasant country; woods brown and mellow varied the fields from which the harvest had been lately carried; a river, gliding between the woods, caught on its surface the somewhat cold gleam of the October sun and sky; at frequent intervals along the banks of the river, tall, cylindrical chimneys, almost like slender round towers, indicated the factories which the trees half concealed; here and there mansions, similar to Crimsworth Hall, occupied agreeable sites on the hill-side; the country wore, on the whole, a cheerful, active, fertile look. Steam, trade, machinery had long banished from it all romance and seclusion. At a distance of five miles, a valley opening between the low hills, held in its cups the great town of X——. A dense, permanent vapour brooded over this locality—there lay Edward's 'Concern.'

I forced my eye to scrutinise this prospect, I forced my mind to dwell on it for a time, and when I found that it communicated no pleasurable emotion to my heart—that it stirred in me none of the hopes a man ought to feel, when he sees laid before him the scene of his life's career—I said to myself, 'William, you are a rebel against circumstances; you are a fool, and know not what you want; you have chosen trade, and you shall be a tradesman. Look!' I continued mentally—'Look at the sooty smoke in that hollow, and know that there is your post! There you cannot dream, you cannot speculate and theorise—there you shall out and work!'

Thus self-schooled, I returned to the house. My brother was in the breakfast-room. I met him collectedly—I could not meet him cheerfully; he was standing on the rug, his back to the fire—how much did I read in the expression of his eye as my glance encountered his, when I advanced to bid him good-morning; how much that was contradictory to my nature! He said 'Good-morning' abruptly and nodded, and then he snatched, rather than took, a newspaper from the table, and began to read it with the air of a master who seizes a pretext to escape the bore of conversing with an underling. It was well I had taken a resolution to endure for a time, or his manner would have gone far to render insupportable the disgust I had just been endeavouring to subdue. I looked at him: I measured his robust frame and powerful proportions; I saw my own reflection in the mirror over the mantel-piece; I amused myself with comparing the two pictures. In face I resembled him, though I was not so handsome; my features were less regular; I had a darker eye, and a broader brow—in form I was greatly inferior—thinner, slighter, not so tall. As an animal, Edward excelled me far; should he prove as paramount in mind as in person I must be a slave—for I must expect from him no lion-like generosity to one weaker than himself; his cold, avaricious eye, his stern, forbidding manner told me he would not spare. Had I then force of mind to cope with him? I did not know; I had never been tried.

Mrs. Crimsworth's entrance diverted my thoughts for a moment. She looked well, dressed in white, her face and her attire shining in morning and bridal freshness. I addressed her with the degree of ease her last night's careless gaiety seemed to warrant, but she replied with coolness and restraint: her husband had tutored her; she was not to be too familiar with his clerk.

As soon as breakfast was over Mr. Crimsworth

VIEW FROM CRIMSWORTH HALL.

intimated to me that they were bringing the gig round to the door, and that in five minutes he should expect me to be ready to go down with him to X——. I did not keep him waiting; we were soon dashing at a rapid rate along the road. The horse he drove was the same vicious animal about which Mrs. Crimsworth had expressed her fears the night before. Once or twice Jack seemed disposed to turn restive, but a vigorous and determined application of the whip from the ruthless hand of his master soon compelled him to submission, and Edward's dilated nostril expressed his triumph in the result of the contest; he scarcely spoke to me during the whole of the brief drive, only opening his lips at intervals to damn his horse.

X—— was all stir and bustle when we entered it; we left the clean streets where there were dwelling-houses and shops, churches, and public buildings; we left all these, and turned down to a region of mills and warehouses; thence we passed through two massive gates into a great paved yard, and we were in Bigben Close, and the mill was before us, vomiting soot from its long chimney, and quivering through its thick brick walls with the commotion of its iron bowels. Workpeople were passing to and fro; a waggon was being laden with pieces. Mr. Crimsworth looked from side to side, and seemed at one glance to comprehend all that was going on; he alighted, and leaving his horse and gig to the care of a man who hastened to take the reins from his hand, he bid me follow him to the counting-house. We entered it; a very different place from the parlours of Crimsworth Hall—a place for business, with a bare, planked floor, a safe, two high desks and stools, and some chairs. A person was seated at one of the desks, who took off his square cap when Mr. Crimsworth entered, and in an instant was again absorbed in his occupation of writing or calculating—I know not which.

Mr. Crimsworth, having removed his mackintosh, sat down by the fire. I remained standing near the hearth; he said presently—'Steighton you may leave the room; I have some business to transact with this gentleman. Come back when you hear the bell.'

The individual at the desk rose and departed, closing the door as he went out. Mr. Crimsworth stirred the fire, then folded his arms, and sat a moment thinking, his lips compressed, his brow knit. I had nothing to do but to watch him—how well his features were cut! what a handsome man he was! Whence, then, came that air of contraction—that narrow and hard aspect on his forehead, in all his lineaments?

Turning to me he began abruptly:—'You are come down to ——shire to learn to be a tradesman?'

'Yes, I am.'

'Have you made up your mind on the point? Let me know that at once.'

'Yes.'

'Well, I am not bound to help you, but I have a place here vacant, if you are qualified for it. I will take you on trial. What can you do? Do you know anything besides that useless trash of college learning—Greek, Latin, and so forth?'

'I have studied mathematics.'

'Stuff! I daresay you have.'

'I can read and write French and German.'

'Hum!' He reflected a moment, then opening a drawer in a desk near him took out a letter, and gave it to me.

'Can you read that?' he asked.

It was a German commercial letter; I translated it; I could not tell whether he was gratified or not—his countenance remained fixed.

'It is well,' he said, after a pause, 'that you are acquainted with something useful, something that may enable you to earn your board and lodging: since you know French and German, I will take you as second clerk to manage the foreign correspondence of the house. I shall give you a good salary—90*l.* a year—and now,' he continued, raising his voice, 'hear once for all what I have to say about our relationship, and all that sort of humbug! I must have no nonsense on that point; it would never suit me. I shall excuse you nothing on the plea of being my brother; if I find you stupid, negligent, dissipated, idle, or possessed of any faults detrimental to the interests of the house, I shall dismiss you as I would any other clerk. Ninety pounds a year are good wages, and I expect to have the full value of my money out of you; remember, too, that things are on a practical footing in my establishment—business-like habits, feelings, and ideas, suit me best. Do you understand?'

'Partly,' I replied. 'I suppose you mean that I am to do my work for my wages; not to expect favour from you, and not to depend on you for any help but what I earn; that suits me exactly, and on these terms I will consent to be your clerk.'

I turned on my heel, and walked to the window; this time I did not consult his face to learn his opinion: what it was I do not know, nor did I then care. After a silence of some minutes he recommenced:—'You perhaps expect to be accommodated with apartments at Crimsworth Hall, and to go and come with me in the gig. I wish you, however, to be aware that such an arrangement would be quite inconvenient to me. I like to have the seat in my gig at liberty for any gentleman whom for business reasons I may wish to take down to the Hall for a night or so. You will seek out lodgings in X——.'

Quitting the window, I walked back to the hearth.

'Of course I shall seek out lodgings in X——,' I answered. 'It would not suit me either to lodge at Crimsworth Hall.'

My tone was quiet. I always speak quietly. Yet Mr. Crimsworth's blue eye became incensed; he took his revenge rather oddly. Turning to me he said bluntly—'You are poor enough, I suppose; how do you expect to live till your quarter's salary becomes due?'

'I shall get on,' said I.

'How do you expect to live?' he repeated in a louder voice.

As I can,' Mr. Crimsworth.

'Get into debt at your peril! that's all,' he answered. 'For aught I know you may have extravagant aristocratic habits: if you have, drop them; I tolerate nothing of the sort here, and I will never give you a shilling extra, whatever liabilities you may incur—mind that.'

'Yes, Mr. Crimsworth, you will find I have a good memory.'

I said no more. I did not think the time was come for much parley. I had an instinctive feeling that it would be folly to let one's temper effervesce often with such a man as Edward. I said to myself, 'I will place my cup under this continual dropping; it shall stand there still and steady; when full, it will run over of itself—meantime patience. Two things are certain. I am capable of performing the work Mr. Crimsworth has set me; I can earn my wages conscientiously, and those wages are sufficient to enable me to live. As to the fact of my brother assuming towards me the bearing of a proud, harsh master, the fault is his, not mine; and shall his injustice, his bad feeling, turn me at once aside from the path I have chosen? No; at least, ere I deviate, I will advance far enough to see whither my career tends. As yet I am only pressing in at the entrance—a strait gate enough; it ought to have a good terminus.' While I thus reasoned, Mr. Crimsworth rang a bell; his first clerk, the individual dismissed previously to our conference, re-entered.

'Mr. Steighton,' said he, 'show Mr. William the letters from Voss Brothers, and give him English copies of the answers; he will translate them.'

Mr. Steighton, a man of about thirty-five, with a face at once sly and heavy, hastened to execute this order; he laid the letters on the desk, and I was soon seated at it, and engaged in rendering the English answers into German. A sentiment of keen pleasure accompanied this first effort to earn my own living—a sentiment neither poisoned nor weakened by the presence of the taskmaster, who stood and watched me for some time as I wrote. I thought he was trying to read my character, but I felt as secure against his scrutiny as if I had had on a casque with the visor down—or rather I showed him my countenance with the confidence that one would show an unlearned man a letter written in Greek; he might see lines, and trace characters, but he could make nothing of them; my nature was not his nature, and its signs were to him like the words of an unknown tongue. Ere long he turned away abruptly, as if baffled, and left the counting-house; he returned to it but twice in the course of that day; each time he mixed and swallowed a glass of brandy-and-water, the materials for making which he extracted from a cupboard on one side of the fireplace; having glanced at my translations—he could read both French and German—he went out again in silence.

CHAPTER III

I SERVED Edward as his second clerk faithfully, punctually, diligently. What was given me to do I had the power and the determination to do well. Mr. Crimsworth watched sharply for defects, but found none; he set Timothy Steighton, his favourite and head man, to watch also. Tim was baffled; I was as exact as himself, and quicker. Mr. Crimsworth made inquiries as to how I lived, whether I got into debt—no, my accounts with my landlady were always straight. I had hired small lodgings, which I contrived to pay for out of a slender fund—the accumulated savings of my Eton pocket-money; for as it had ever been abhorrent to my nature to ask pecuniary assistance, I had early acquired habits of self-denying economy; husbanding my monthly allowance with anxious care, in order to obviate the danger of being forced, in some moment of future exigency, to beg additional aid. I remember many called me miser at the time, and I used to couple the reproach with this consolation—better to be misunderstood now than repulsed hereafter. At this day I had my reward; I had had it before, when on parting with my irritated uncles one of them threw down on the table before me a 5*l.* note, which I was able to leave there, saying that my travelling expenses were already provided for. Mr. Crimsworth employed Tim to find out whether my landlady had any complaint to make on the score of my morals; she answered that she believed I was a very religious man, and asked Tim, in her turn, if he thought I had any intention of going into the Church some day; for, she said, she had had young curates to lodge in her house who were nothing equal to me for steadiness and quietness.

Tim was 'a religious man' himself; indeed, he was 'a joined Methodist,' which did not (be it understood) prevent him from being at the same time an ingrained rascal, and he came away much posed at hearing this account of my piety. Having imparted it to Mr. Crimsworth, that gentleman, who himself frequented no place of worship, and owned no God but Mammon, turned the information into a weapon of attack against the equability of my temper. He commenced a series of covert sneers, of which I did not at first perceive the drift, till my landlady happened to relate the conversation she had had with Mr. Steighton; this enlightened me: afterwards I came to the counting-house prepared, and managed to receive the millowner's blasphemous sarcasms, when next levelled at me, on a buckler of impenetrable indifference. Ere long he tired of wasting his ammunition on a statue, but he did not throw away the shafts—he only kept them quiet in his quiver.

Once during my clerkship I had an invitation to Crimsworth Hall; it was on the occasion of a large party given in honour of the master's birthday; he had always been accustomed to invite his clerks on similar anniversaries, and could not well pass me over; I was, however, kept strictly in the background. Mrs. Crimsworth, elegantly dressed in satin and lace, blooming in youth and health, vouchsafed me no more notice than was expressed by a distant move; Crimsworth, of course, never spoke to me; I was introduced to none of the band of young ladies, who, enveloped in silvery clouds of white gauze and muslin, sat in array against me on the opposite side of a long and large room; in fact, I was fairly isolated, and could but contemplate the shining ones from afar, and when weary of such a dazzling scene, turn for a change to the consideration of the carpet pattern. Mr. Crimsworth, standing on the rug, his elbow supported by the marble mantelpiece, and about him a group of very pretty girls, with whom he conversed gaily—Mr. Crimsworth, thus placed, glanced at me; I looked weary, solitary, kept down like some desolate tutor or governess; he was satisfied.

Dancing began; I should have liked well enough to be introduced to some pleasing and intelligent girl, and to have freedom and opportunity to show that I could both feel and communicate the pleasure of social intercourse—that I was not, in short, a block, or a piece of furniture, but an acting, thinking, sentient man. Many smiling faces and graceful figures glided past me, but the smiles were lavished on other eyes, the figures sustained by other hands than mine. I turned away tantalised, left the dancers, and wandered into the oak-panelled dining-room. No fibre of sympathy united me to any living thing in this house; I looked for and found my mother's picture. I took a wax taper from a stand, and held it up. I gazed long, earnestly; my heart grew to the image. My mother, I perceived, had bequeathed to me much of her features and countenance—her forehead, her eyes, her complexion. No regular beauty pleases egotistical human beings so much as a softened and refined likeness of themselves; for this reason, fathers regard with complacency the lineaments of their daughters' faces, where frequently their own similitude is found flatteringly associated with softness of hue and delicacy of outline. I was just wondering how that picture, to me, so interesting, would strike an impartial spectator, when a voice close behind me pronounced the words—'Humph! there's some sense in that face.'

I turned; at my elbow stood a tall man, young, though probably five or six years older than I—in other respects of an appearance the opposite to commonplace; though just now, as I am not disposed to paint his portrait in detail, the reader must be content with the silhouette I have just thrown off; it was all I myself saw of him for the moment: I did not investigate the colour of his eyebrows, nor of his eyes either; I saw his stature, and the outline of his shape; I saw, too, his fastidious-looking *retroussé* nose; these observations, few in number, and general in character (the last excepted), sufficed, for they enabled me to recognise him.

'Good-evening, Mr. Hunsden,' muttered I, with a bow and then, like a shy noodle as I was, I began moving away

—and why? Simply because Mr. Hunsden was a manufacturer and a millowner, and I was only a clerk, and my instinct propelled me from my superior. I had frequently seen Hunsden in Bigben Close, where he came almost weekly to transact business with Mr. Crimsworth, but I had never spoken to him, nor he to me, and I owed him a sort of involuntary grudge, because he had more than once been the tacit witness of insults offered by Edward to me. I had the conviction that he could only regard me as a poor-spirited slave, wherefore I now went about to shun his presence and eschew his conversation.

'Where are you going?' asked he, as I edged off sideways. I had already noticed that Mr. Hunsden indulged in abrupt forms of speech, and I perversely said to myself—

'He thinks he may speak as he likes to a poor clerk; but my mood is not, perhaps, so supple as he deems it, and his rough freedom pleases me not at all.'

I made some slight reply, rather indifferent than courteous, and continued to move away. He coolly planted himself in my path.

'Stay here awhile,' said he: 'it is so hot in the dancing-room; besides, you don't dance; you have not had a partner to-night.'

He was right, and as he spoke neither his look, tone, nor manner displeased me; my *amour-propre* was propitiated; he had not addressed me out of condescension, but because, having repaired to the cool dining-room for refreshment, he now wanted some one to talk to, by way of temporary amusement. I hate to be condescended to, but I like well enough to oblige; I stayed.

'That is a good picture,' he continued, recurring to the portrait.

'Do you consider the face pretty?' I asked.

'Pretty! no—how can it be pretty, with sunk eyes and hollow cheeks? but it is peculiar; it seems to think. You could have a talk with that woman, if she were alive, on other subjects than dress, visiting, and compliments.'

I agreed with him, but did not say so. He went on.

'Not that I admire a head of that sort; it wants character and force; there's too much of the sen-si-tive' (so he articulated it, curling his lip at the same time) 'in that mouth; besides, there is Aristocrat written on the brow and defined in the figure; I hate your aristocrats.'

'You think, then, Mr. Hunsden, that patrician descent may be read in a distinctive cast of form and features?'

'Patrician descent be hanged. Who doubts that your lordlings may have their distinctive "cast of form and features" as much as we ——shire tradesmen have ours? But which is the best? Not theirs assuredly. As to their women, it is a little different; they cultivate beauty from childhood upwards, and may by care and training attain to a certain degree of excellence in that point, just like the Oriental odalisques. Yet even this superiority is doubtful. Compare the figure in that frame with Mrs. Edward Crimsworth—which is the finer animal?'

I replied quietly: 'Compare yourself and Mr. Edward Crimsworth, Mr. Hunsden.'

'Oh, Crimsworth is better filled up than I am, I know; besides, he has a straight nose, arched eyebrows, and all that; but these advantages, if they are advantages, he did not inherit from his mother, the patrician, but from his father, old Crimsworth, who, *my* father says, was as veritable a ——shire blue-dyer as ever put indigo in a vat; yet withal the handsomest man in the three Ridings. It is you, William, who are the aristocrat of your family, and you are not as fine a fellow as your plebeian brother by a long chalk.'

There was something in Mr. Hunsden's point-blank mode of speech which rather pleased me than otherwise, because it set me at my ease. I continued the conversation with a degree of interest.

'How do you happen to know that I am Mr. Crimsworth's brother? I thought you and everybody else looked upon me only in the light of a poor clerk?'

'Well, and so we do; and what are you but a poor clerk? You do Crimsworth's work, and he gives you wages—shabby wages they are, too.'

I was silent. Hunsden's language now bordered on the impertinent, still his manner did not offend me in the least—it only piqued my curiosity; I wanted him to go on, which he did in a little while.

'This world is an absurd one,' said he.

'Why so, Mr. Hunsden?'

'I wonder you should ask: you are yourself a strong proof of the absurdity I allude to.'

I was determined he should explain himself of his own accord, without my pressing him so to do—so I resumed my silence.

'Is it your intention to become a tradesman?' he inquired presently.

'It was my serious intention three months ago.'

'Humph! the more fool you—you look like a tradesman! What a practical business-like face you have!'

'My face is as the Lord made it, Mr. Hunsden.'

'The Lord never made either your face or head for X——. What good can your bumps of ideality, comparison, self-esteem, conscientiousness, do you here? But if you like Bigben Close, stay there; it's your own affair, not mine.'

'Perhaps I have no choice.'

'Well, I care nought about it—it will make little difference to me what you do or where you go; but I'm cool now—I want to dance again; and I see such a fine girl sitting in the corner of the sofa there by her mamma; see if I don't get her for a partner in a jiffy! There's Waddy—Sam Waddy making up to her: won't I cut him out?'

And Mr. Hunsden strode away. I watched him through the open folding-doors; he outstripped Waddy, applied for the hand of the fine girl, and led her off triumphant. She was a tall, well-made, full-formed, dashingly-dressed young woman, much in the style of Mrs. E. Crimsworth; Hunsden whirled her through the waltz with spirit; he kept at her side during the remainder of the evening, and I read in her animated and gratified countenance that he succeeded in making himself perfectly agreeable. The mamma too (a stout person in a turban—Mrs. Lupton by name) looked well pleased; prophetic visions probably flattered her inward eye. The Hunsdens were of an old stem; and scornful as Yorke (such was my late interlocutor's name) professed to be of the advantages of birth, in his secret heart he well knew and fully appreciated the distinction his ancient, if not high lineage conferred on him in a mushroom-place like X——, concerning whose inhabitants it was proverbially said, that not one in a thousand knew his own grandfather. Moreover, the Hunsdens, once rich, were still independent; and report affirmed that Yorke bade fair, by his success in business, to restore to pristine prosperity the partially decayed fortunes of his house. These circumstances considered, Mrs. Lupton's broad face might well wear a smile of complacency as she contemplated the heir of Hunsden Wood occupied in paying assiduous court to her darling Sarah Martha. I, however, whose observations being less anxious, were likely to be more accurate, soon saw that the grounds for maternal self-congratulation were slight indeed; the gentleman appeared to me much more desirous of making, than susceptible of receiving, an impression. I know not what it was in Mr. Hunsden that, as I watched him (I had nothing better to do), suggested to me, every now and then, the idea of a foreigner. In form and features he might be pronounced English, though even there one caught a dash of something Gallic; but he had no English shyness: he had learnt somewhere, somehow, the art of setting himself quite at his ease, and of allowing no insular timidity to intervene as a barrier between him and his convenience or pleasure. Refinement he did not affect, yet vulgar he could not be called; he was not odd—no quiz—yet he resembled no one else I had ever seen before; his general bearing intimated complete, sovereign satisfaction with himself; yet, at times, an indescribable shade passed like an eclipse over his countenance, and seemed to me like the sign of a sudden and strong inward doubt of himself, his words and actions—an energetic discontent at his life or his social position, his future prospects or his mental attainments—I know not which; perhaps after all it might only be a bilious caprice.

CHAPTER IV

No man likes to acknowledge that he has made a mistake in the choice of his profession, and every man, worthy of the name, will row long against wind and tide before he allows himself to cry out, 'I am baffled!' and submits to be floated passively back to land. From the first week of my residence in X—— I felt my occupation irksome. The thing itself—the work of copying and translating business-letters—was a dry and tedious task enough, but had that been all, I should long have borne with the nuisance; I am not of an impatient nature, and influenced by the double desire of getting my living and justifying to myself and others the resolution I had taken to become a tradesman, I should have endured in silence the rust and cramp of my best faculties; I should not have whispered even inwardly, that I longed for liberty; I should have pent in every sigh by which my heart might have ventured to intimate its distress under the closeness, smoke, monotony and joyless tumult of Bigben Close, and its panting desire for freer and fresher scenes; I should have set up the image of Duty, the fetish of Perseverance, in my small bedroom at Mrs. King's lodgings, and they too should have been my household gods, from which my darling, my cherished-in-secret, Imagination, the tender and the mighty, should never, either by softness or strength, have severed me. But this was not all; the antipathy which had sprung up between myself and my employer striking deeper root and spreading denser shade daily, excluded me from every glimpse of the sunshine of life; and I began to feel like a plant growing in humid darkness out of the slimy walls of a well.

Antipathy is the only word which can express the feeling Edward Crimsworth had for me—a feeling, in a great measure, involuntary, and which was liable to be excited by every the most trifling movement, look, or word of mine. My southern accent annoyed him; the degree of education evinced in my language irritated him; my punctuality, industry, and accuracy, fixed his dislike, and gave it the high flavour and poignant relish of envy; he feared that I too should one day make a successful tradesman. Had I been in anything inferior to him, he would not have hated me so thoroughly, but I knew all that he knew, and, what was worse, he suspected that I kept the padlock of silence on mental wealth in which he was no sharer. If he could have once placed me in a ridiculous or mortifying position, he would have forgiven me much, but I was guarded by three faculties—Caution, Tact, Observation; and prowling and prying as was Edward's malignity, it could never baffle the lynx-eyes of these, my natural sentinels. Day by day did his malice watch my tact, hoping it would sleep, and prepared to steal snake-like on its slumber; but tact, if it be genuine, never sleeps.

I had received my first quarter's wages, and was returning to my lodgings, possessed heart and soul with the pleasant feeling that the master who had paid me grudged every penny of that hard-earned pittance—(I had long ceased to regard Mr. Crimsworth as my brother—he was a hard, grinding master; he wished to be an inexorable tyrant: that was all). Thoughts, not varied but strong, occupied my mind; two voices spoke within me, again and again they uttered the same monotonous phrases. One said: 'William, your life is intolerable.' The other: 'What can you do to alter it?' I walked fast, for it was a cold, frosty night in January; as I approached my lodgings, I turned from a general view of my affairs to the particular speculation as to whether my fire would be out; looking towards the window of my sitting-room, I saw no cheering red gleam.

'That slut of a servant has neglected it as usual,' said I, 'and I shall see nothing but pale ashes if I go in; it is a fine starlight night—I will walk a little farther.'

It *was* a fine night, and the streets were dry and even clean for X——; there was a crescent curve of moonlight to be seen by the parish church tower, and hundreds of stars shone keenly bright in all quarters of the sky.

Unconsciously I steered my course towards the country; I had got into Grove Street, and began to feel the pleasure of seeing dim trees at the extremity, round a suburban house, when a person leaning over the iron gate of one of the small gardens which front the neat dwelling-houses in this street, addressed me as I was hurrying with quick stride past.

'What the deuce is the hurry? Just so must Lot have left Sodom, when he expected fire to pour down upon it, out of burning brass clouds.'

I stopped short, and looked towards the speaker. I smelt the fragrance, and saw the red spark of a cigar; the dusk outline of a man, too, bent towards me over the wicket.

'You see I am meditating in the field at eventide,' continued this shade. 'God knows it's cool work! especially as instead of Rebecca on a camel's hump, with bracelets on her arms and a ring in her nose, Fate sends me only a counting-house clerk, in a grey tweed wrapper.'

The voice was familiar to me—its second utterance enabled me to seize the speaker's identity.

'Mr. Hunsden! good-evening.'

'Good-evening, indeed! yes, but you would have passed me without recognition if I had not been so civil as to speak first.'

'I did not know you.'

'A famous excuse! You ought to have known me; I knew you, though you were going ahead like a steam-engine. Are the police after you?'

'It wouldn't be worth their while; I'm not of consequence enough to attract them.'

'Alas, poor shepherd! Alack and well-a-day! What a theme for regret, and how down in the mouth you must be, judging from the sound of your voice! But since you're not running from the police, from whom are you running? the devil?'

'On the contrary, I am going post to him.'

'That is well—you're just in luck: this is Tuesday evening; there are scores of market gigs and carts returning to Dinneford to-night; and he, or some of his, have a seat in all regularly; so, if you'll step in and sit half-an-hour in my bachelor's parlour, you may catch him as he passes without much trouble. I think though you'd better let him alone to-night, he'll have so many customers to serve; Tuesday is his busy day in X—— and Dinneford; come in at all events.'

He swung the wicket open as he spoke.

'Do you really wish me to go in?' I asked.

'As you please—I'm alone; your company for an hour or two would be agreeable to me; but, if you don't choose to favour me so far, I'll not press the point. I hate to bore any one.'

It suited me to accept the invitation as it suited Hunsden to give it. I passed through the gate, and followed him to the front door, which he opened; thence we traversed a passage, and entered his parlour; the door being shut, he pointed me to an arm-chair by the hearth; I sat down, and glanced round me.

It was a comfortable room, at once snug and handsome; the bright grate was filled with a genuine ——shire fire, red, clear, and generous, no penurious South-of-England embers heaped in the corner of a grate. On the table a shaded lamp diffused around a soft, pleasant, and equal light; the furniture was almost luxurious for a young bachelor, comprising a couch and two very easy chairs; bookshelves filled the recesses on each side of the mantelpiece; they were well furnished, and arranged with perfect order. The neatness of the room suited my taste; I hate irregular and slovenly habits. From what I saw I concluded that Hunsden's ideas on that point corresponded with my own. While he removed from the centre table to the sideboard a few pamphlets and periodicals, I ran my eye along the shelves of the bookcase nearest me. French and German works predominated, the old French dramatists, sundry modern authors, Thiers, Villemain, Paul de Kock, George Sand, Eugène Sue; in German—Goethe, Schiller, Zschokke, Jean Paul Richter; in English there were works on Political Economy. I examined no further, for Mr. Hunsden himself recalled my attention.

'You shall have something,' said he, 'for you ought to feel disposed for refreshment after walking nobody knows how far on such a Canadian night as this; but it shall not be brandy-and-water, and it shall not be a bottle of port, nor ditto of sherry. I keep no such poison. I have Rheinwein for my own drinking, and you may choose between that and coffee.'

Here again Hunsden suited me: if there was one generally received practice I abhorred more than another, it was the habitual imbibing of spirits and strong wines. I had, however, no fancy for his acid German nectar, but I liked coffee, so I responded—'Give me some coffee, Mr. Hunsden.'

I perceived my answer pleased him; he had doubtless expected to see a chilling effect produced by his steady announcement that he would give me neither wine nor spirits; he just shot one searching glance at my face to ascertain whether my cordiality was genuine or a mere feint of politeness. I smiled, because I quite understood him; and, while I honoured his conscientious firmness, I was amused at his mistrust; he seemed satisfied, rang the bell, and ordered coffee, which was presently brought; for himself, a bunch of grapes and half a pint of something sour sufficed. My coffee was excellent; I told him so, and expressed the shuddering pity with which his anchorite fare inspired me. He did not answer, and I scarcely think heard my remark. At that moment one of those momentary eclipses I before alluded to had come over his face, extinguishing his smile, and replacing, by an abstracted and alienated look, the customarily shrewd, bantering glance of his eye. I employed the interval of silence in a rapid scrutiny of his physiognomy. I had never observed him closely before; and as my sight is very short, I had gathered only a vague, general idea of his appearance; I was surprised now, on examination, to perceive how small, and even feminine, were his lineaments; his tall figure, long and dark locks, his voice and general bearing, had impressed me with the notion of something powerful and massive; not at all:—my own features were cast in a harsher and squarer mould than his. I discerned that there would be contrasts between his inward and outward man; contentions, too; for I suspected his soul had more of will and ambition than his body had of fibre and muscle. Perhaps, in these incompatibilities of the 'physique' with the 'morale,' lay the secret of that fitful gloom; he *would* but *could* not, and the athletic mind scowled scorn on its more fragile companion. As to his good looks, I should have liked to have a woman's opinion on that subject; it seemed to me that his face might produce the same effect on a lady that a very piquant and interesting, though scarcely pretty, female face would on a man. I have mentioned his dark locks—they were brushed sideways above a white and sufficiently expansive forehead; his cheek had a rather hectic freshness; his features might have done well on canvas, but indifferently in marble: they were plastic; character had set a stamp upon each; expression re-cast them at her pleasure, and strange metamorphoses she wrought, giving him now the mien of a morose bull, and anon that of an arch and mischievous girl; more frequently, the two semblances were blent, and a queer, composite countenance they made.

Starting from his silent fit, he began:—'William! what a fool you are to live in those dismal lodgings of Mrs. King's, when you might take rooms here in Grove Street, and have a garden like me!'

'I should be too far from the mill.'

'What of that? It would do you good to walk there and back two or three times a day; besides, are you such a fossil that you never wish to see a flower or a green leaf?'

'I am no fossil.'

'What are you then? You sit at that desk in Crimsworth's counting-house day by day and week by week, scraping with a pen on paper, just like an automaton; you never get up; you never say you are tired; you never ask for a holiday; you never take change or relaxation; you give way to no excess of an evening; you neither keep wild company, nor indulge in strong drink.'

'Do you, Mr. Hunsden?'

'Don't think to pose me with short questions; your case and mine are diametrically different, and it is nonsense attempting to draw a parallel. I say, that when a man endures patiently what ought to be unendurable, he is a fossil.'

'Whence do you acquire the knowledge of my patience?'

'Why, man, do you suppose you are a mystery? The other night you seemed surprised at my knowing to what family you belonged; now you find subject for wonderment in my calling you patient. What do you think I do with my eyes and ears? I've been in your counting-house more than once when Crimsworth has treated you like a dog: called for a book, for instance, and when you gave him the wrong one, or what he chose to consider the wrong one, flung it back almost in your face; desired you to shut or open the door as if you had been his flunkey; to say nothing of your position at the party about a month ago, where you had neither place nor partner, but hovered about like a poor, shabby hanger-on; and how patient you were under each and all of these circumstances!'

'Well, Mr. Hunsden, what then?'

'I can hardly tell you what then; the conclusion to be drawn as to your character depends upon the nature of the motives which guide your conduct; if you are patient because you expect to make something eventually out of Crimsworth, notwithstanding his tyranny, or perhaps by means of it, you are what the world calls an interested and mercenary, but maybe a very wise fellow; if you are patient because you think it a duty to meet insult with submission, you are an essential sap, and in no shape the man for my money; if you are patient because your nature is phlegmatic, flat, inexcitable, and that you cannot get up to the pitch of resistance, why, God made you to be crushed; and lie down by all means, and lie flat, and let Juggernaut ride well over you.'

Mr. Hunsden's eloquence was not, it will be perceived, of the smooth and oily order. As he spoke, he pleased me ill. I seem to recognise in him one of those characters who, sensitive enough themselves, are selfishly relentless towards the sensitiveness of others. Moreover, though he was neither like Crimsworth nor Lord Tynedale, yet he was acrid, and, I suspected, overbearing in his way: there was a tone of despotism in the urgency of the very reproaches by which he aimed at goading the oppressed into rebellion against the oppressor. Looking at him still more fixedly than I had yet done, I saw written in his eye and mien a resolution to arrogate to himself a freedom so unlimited, that it might often trench on the just liberty of his neighbours. I rapidly ran over these thoughts, and then I laughed a low and involuntary laugh, moved thereto by a slight inward revelation of the inconsistency of man. It was as I thought: Hunsden had expected me to take with calm his incorrect and offensive surmises, his bitter and haughty taunts; and himself was chafed by a laugh, scarce louder than a whisper.

His brow darkened, his thin nostril dilated a little.

'Yes,' he began, 'I told you that you were an aristocrat, and who but an aristocrat would laugh such a laugh as that, and look such a look? A laugh frigidly jeering; a look lazily mutinous; gentlemanlike irony, patrician resentment.

What a nobleman you would have made, William Crimsworth! You are cut out for one; pity Fortune has baulked Nature! Look at the features, figure, even to the hands—distinction all over—ugly distinction! Now, if you'd only an estate and a mansion, and a park, and a title, how you could play the exclusive, maintain the rights of your class, train your tenantry in habits of respect to the peerage, oppose at every step the advancing power of the people, support your rotten order, and be ready for its sake to wade knee-deep in churls' blood; as it is, you've no power; you can do nothing; you're wrecked and stranded on the shores of commerce; forced into collision with practical men, with whom you cannot cope, for *you'll never be a tradesman.*'

The first part of Hunsden's speech moved me not at all, or, if it did, it was only to wonder at the perversion into which prejudice had twisted his judgment of my character; the concluding sentence, however, not only moved, but shook me; the blow it gave was a severe one, because Truth wielded the weapon. If I smiled now, it was only in disdain of myself.

Hunsden saw his advantage; he followed it up.

'You'll make nothing by trade,' continued he; 'nothing more than the crust of dry bread and the draught of fair water on which you now live; your only chance of getting a competency lies in marrying a rich widow, or running away with an heiress.'

'I leave such shifts to be put in practice by those who devise them,' said I, rising.

'And even that is hopeless,' he went on coolly. 'What widow would have you? Much less, what heiress? You're not bold and venturesome enough for the one, nor handsome and fascinating enough for the other. You think perhaps you look intelligent and polished; carry your intellect and refinement to market, and tell me in a private note what price is bid for them.'

Mr. Hunsden had taken his tone for the night; the string he struck was out of tune, he would finger no other. Averse to discord, of which I had enough every day and all day long, I concluded, at last, that silence and solitude were preferable to jarring converse; I bade him good-night.

'What! Are you going, lad? Well, good-night: you'll find the door.' And he sat still in front of the fire, while I left the room and the house. I had got a good way on my return to my lodgings before I found out that I was walking very fast, and breathing very hard, and that my nails were almost stuck into the palms of my clenched hands, and that my teeth were set fast; on making this discovery, I relaxed both my pace, fists, and jaws, but I could not so soon cause the regrets rushing rapidly through my mind to slacken their tide. Why did I make myself a tradesman? Why did I enter Hunsden's house this evening? Why, at dawn to-morrow, must I repair to Crimsworth's mill? All that night did I ask myself these questions, and all that night fiercely demanded of my soul an answer. I got no sleep; my head burned, my feet froze; at last the factory bells rang, and I sprang from my bed with other slaves.

CHAPTER V

THERE is a climax to everything, to every state of feeling as well as to every position in life. I turned this truism over in my mind as, in the frosty dawn of a January morning, I hurried down the steep and now icy street which descended from Mrs. King's to the Close. The factory workpeople had preceded me by nearly an hour, and the mill was all lighted up and in full operation when I reached it. I repaired to my post in the counting-house as usual; the fire there, but just lit, as yet only smoked; Steighton was not yet arrived. I shut the door and sat down at the desk; my hands, recently washed in half-frozen water, were still numb; I could not write till they had regained vitality, so I went on thinking, and still the theme of my thoughts was the 'climax.' Self-dissatisfaction troubled exceedingly the current of my meditations.

'Come, William Crimsworth,' said my conscience, or whatever it is that within ourselves takes ourselves to task—'Come, get a clear notion of what you would have, or what you would not have. You talk of a climax; pray has your endurance reached its climax? It is not four months old. What a fine resolute fellow you imagined yourself to be when you told Tynedale you would tread in your father's steps, and a pretty treading you are likely to make of it! How well you like X——! Just at this moment how redolent of pleasant associations are its streets, its shops, its warehouses, its factories! How the prospect of this day cheers you! Letter-copying till noon, solitary dinner at your lodgings, letter-copying till evening, solitude, for you neither find pleasure in Brown's, nor Smith's, nor Nicholls', nor Eccles' company; and as to Hunsden, you fancied there was pleasure to be derived from his society—he! he! how did you like the taste you had of him last night? was it sweet? Yet he is a talented, an original-minded man, and even he does not like you; your self-respect defies you to like him; he has always seen you to disadvantage; he always will see you to disadvantage; your positions are unequal, and were they on the same level your minds could not assimilate; never hope, then, to gather the honey of friendship out of that thorn-guarded plant. Hollo, Crimsworth! where are your thoughts tending? You leave the recollection of Hunsden as a bee would a rock, as a bird a desert; and your aspirations spread eager wings towards a land of visions where, now in advancing daylight—in X—— daylight—you dare to dream of congeniality, repose, union. Those three you will never meet in this world; they are angels. The souls of just men made perfect may encounter them in heaven, but your soul will never be made perfect. Eight o'clock strikes! your hands are thawed, get to work!'

'Work? why should I work?' said I sullenly: 'I cannot please though I toil like a slave.' 'Work, work!' reiterated the inward voice. 'I may work, it will do no good,' I growled; but nevertheless I drew out a packet of letters and commenced my task—task thankless and bitter as that of the Israelite crawling over the sun-baked fields of Egypt in search of straw and stubble wherewith to accomplish his tale of bricks.

About ten o'clock I heard Mr. Crimsworth's gig turn into the yard, and in a minute or two he entered the counting-house. It was his custom to glance his eye at Steighton and myself, to hang up his mackintosh, stand a minute with his back to the fire, and then walk out. To-day he did not deviate from his usual habits; the only difference was that when he looked at me, his brow, instead of being merely hard, was surly; his eye, instead of being cold, was fierce. He studied me a minute or two longer than usual, but went out in silence.

Twelve o'clock arrived; the bell rang for a suspension of labour; the workpeople went off to their dinners; Steighton, too, departed, desiring me to lock the counting-house door, and take the key with me. I was tying up a bundle of papers, and putting them in their place, preparatory to closing my desk, when Crimsworth reappeared at the door, and entering closed it behind him.

'You'll stay here a minute,' said he, in a deep, brutal voice, while his nostrils distended and his eye shot a spark of sinister fire.

Alone with Edward I remembered our relationship, and remembering that forgot the difference of position; I put away deference and careful forms of speech; I answered with simple brevity.

'It is time to go home,' I said, turning the key in my desk.

'You'll stay here!' he reiterated. 'And take your hand off that key! leave it in the lock!'

'Why?' asked I. 'What cause is there for changing my usual plans?'

'Do as I order,' was the answer, 'and no questions! You are my servant, obey me! What have you been about——?' He was going on in the same breath, when an abrupt pause announced that rage had for the moment got the better of articulation.

'You may look, if you wish to know,' I replied. 'There is the open desk, there are the papers.'

'Confound your insolence! What have you been about?'

'Your work, and have done it well.'

'Hypocrite and twaddler. Smooth-faced, snivelling greasehorn!' (this last term is, I believe, purely ——shire, and alludes to the horn of black, rancid whale-oil, usually to be seen suspended to cartwheels, and employed for greasing the same).

'Come, Edward Crimsworth, enough of this. It is time you and I wound up accounts. I have now given your service three months' trial, and I find it the most nauseous slavery under the sun. Seek another clerk. I stay no longer.'

'What! do you dare to give me notice? Stop at least for your wages.' He took down the heavy gig whip hanging beside his mackintosh.

I permitted myself to laugh with a degree of scorn I took no pains to temper or hide. His fury boiled up, and when he had sworn half-a-dozen vulgar, impious oaths, without, however, venturing to lift the whip, he continued:—'I've found you out and know you thoroughly, you mean, whining lickspittle! What have you been saying all over X—— about me? Answer me that!'

'You? I have neither inclination nor temptation to talk about you.'

'You lie! It is your practice to talk about me: it is your constant habit to make public complaint of the treatment you receive at my hands. You have gone and told it far and near that I give you low wages and knock you about like a dog. I wish you were a dog! I'd set to this minute, and never stir from the spot till I'd cut every strip of flesh from your bones with this whip.'

He flourished his tool. The end of the lash just touched my forehead. A warm excited thrill ran through my veins, my blood seemed to give a bound, and then raced fast and hot along its channels. I got up nimbly, came round to where he stood, and faced him.

'Down with your whip!' said I, 'and explain this instant what you mean.'

'Sirrah! to whom are you speaking?'

'To you. There is no one else present, I think. You say I have been calumniating you—complaining of your low wages and bad treatment. Give your grounds for these assertions.'

Crimsworth had no dignity, and when I sternly demanded an explanation, he gave one in a loud, scolding voice.

'Grounds! you shall have them; and turn to the light, that I may see your brazen face blush black, when you hear yourself proved to be a liar and a hypocrite. At a public meeting in the Town-hall yesterday, I had the pleasure of hearing myself insulted by the speaker opposed to me in the question under discussion, by allusions to my private affairs; by cant about monsters without natural affection, family despots, and such trash; and when I rose to answer, I was met by a shout from the filthy mob, where the mention of your name enabled me at once to detect the quarter in which this base attack had originated. When I looked round, I saw that treacherous villain, Hunsden, acting as fugleman. I detected you in close conversation with Hunsden at my house a month ago, and I know that you were at Hunsden's rooms last night. Deny it if you dare.'

'Oh, I shall not deny it! And if Hunsden hounded on the people to hiss you, he did quite right. You deserve popular execration; for a worse man, a harder master, a more brutal brother than you are, has seldom existed.'

'Sirrah! sirrah!' reiterated Crimsworth; and to complete his apostrophe, he cracked the whip straight over my head.

A minute sufficed to wrest it from him, break it in two pieces, and throw it under the grate. He made a headlong rush at me, which I evaded, and said—'Touch me, and I'll have you up before the nearest magistrate.'

Men like Crimsworth, if firmly and calmly resisted, always abate something of their exorbitant insolence; he had no mind to be brought before a magistrate, and I suppose he saw I meant what I said. After an odd and long stare at me, at once bull-like and amazed, he seemed to bethink himself that, after all, his money gave him sufficient superiority over a beggar like me, and that he had in his hands a surer and more dignified mode of revenge than the somewhat hazardous one of personal chastisement.

'Take your hat,' said he. 'Take what belongs to you, and go out at that door; get away to your parish, you pauper: beg, steal, starve, get transported, do what you like; but at your peril venture again into my sight! If ever I hear of your setting foot on an inch of ground belonging to me, I'll hire a man to cane you.'

'It is not likely you'll have the chance; once off your premises, what temptation can I have to return to them? I leave a prison, I leave a tyrant; I leave what is worse than the worst that can lie before me, so no fear of my coming back.'

'Go, or I'll make you!' exclaimed Crimsworth.

I walked deliberately to my desk, took out such of its contents as were my own property, put them in my pocket, locked the desk, and placed the key on the top.

'What are you abstracting from that desk?' demanded the millowner. 'Leave all behind in its place, or I'll send for a policeman to search you.'

'Look sharp about it, then,' said I, and I took down my hat, drew on my gloves, and walked leisurely out of the counting-house—walked out of it to enter it no more.

I recollect that when the mill-bell rang the dinner-hour, before Mr. Crimsworth entered, and the scene above related took place, I had had rather a sharp appetite, and had been waiting somewhat impatiently to hear the signal of feeding time. I forgot it now, however; the images of potatoes and roast-mutton were effaced from my mind by the stir and tumult which the transaction of the last half-hour had there excited. I only thought of walking, that the action of my muscles might harmonize with the action of my nerves; and walk I did, fast and far. How could I do otherwise? A load was lifted off my heart; I felt light and liberated. I had got away from Bigben Close without a breach of resolution; without injury to my self-respect. I had not forced circumstances; circumstances had freed me. Life was again open to me; no longer was its horizon limited by the high black wall surrounding Crimsworth's mill. Two hours had elapsed before my sensations had so far subsided as to leave me calm enough to remark for what wider and clearer boundaries I had exchanged that sooty girdle. When I did look up, lo! straight before me lay Grovetown, a village of villas about five miles out of X——. The short winter day, as I perceived from the far-declined sun, was already approaching its close; a chill frost-mist was rising from the river on which X—— stands, and along whose banks the road I had taken lay; it dimmed the earth, but did not obscure the clear icy blue of the January sky. There was a great stillness near and far; the time of the day favoured tranquillity, as the people were all employed within-doors, the hour of evening release from the factories not being yet arrived; a sound of full-flowing water alone pervaded the air, for the river was deep and abundant, swelled by the melting of a late snow. I stood awhile, leaning over a wall; and looking down at the current: I watched the rapid rush of its waves. I desired memory to take a clear and permanent impression of the scene, and treasure it for future years. Grovetown church clock struck four; looking up, I beheld the last of that day's sun, glinting red through the leafless boughs of some very old oak trees surrounding the church—its light coloured and characterized the picture as I wished. I paused yet a moment, till the sweet, slow sound of the bell had quite died out of the air; then ear, eye and feeling satisfied, I quitted the wall, and once more turned my face towards X——.

CHAPTER VI

I RE-ENTERED the town a hungry man; the dinner I had forgotten recurred seductively to my recollection; and it was with a quick step and sharp appetite I ascended the narrow street leading to my lodgings. It was dark when I opened the front door and walked into the house. I wondered how my fire would be; the night was cold, and I shuddered at the prospect of a grate full of sparkless cinders. To my joyful surprise, I found, on entering my sitting-room, a good fire and a clean hearth. I had hardly noticed this phenomenon, when I became aware of another subject for wonderment; the chair I usually occupied near the hearth was already filled; a person sat there with his arms folded on his chest, and his legs stretched out on the rug. Short-sighted as I am, doubtful as was the gleam of the firelight, a moment's examination enabled me to recognize in this person my acquaintance, Mr. Hunsden. I could not of course be much pleased to see him, considering the manner in which I had parted from him the night before, and as I walked to the hearth, stirred the fire, and said coolly, 'Good-evening,' my demeanour evinced as little cordiality as I felt; yet I wondered in my own mind what had brought him there; and I wondered, also, what motives had induced him to interfere so actively between me and Edward; it was to him, it appeared, that I owed my welcome dismissal; still I could not bring myself to ask him questions, to show any eagerness of curiosity; if he chose to explain, he might, but the explanation should be a perfectly voluntary one on his part; I thought he was entering upon it.

'You owe me a debt of gratitude,' were his first words.

'Do I?' said I; 'I hope it is not a large one, for I am much too poor to charge myself with heavy liabilities of any kind.'

'Then declare yourself bankrupt at once, for this liability is a ton weight at least. When I came in I found your fire out, and I had it lit again, and made that sulky drab of a servant stay and blow at it with the bellows till it had burnt up properly; now say, "Thank you!"'

'Not till I have had something to eat; I can thank nobody while I am so famished.'

I rang the bell and ordered tea and some cold meat.

'Cold meat!' exclaimed Hunsden, as the servant closed the door, 'what a glutton you are, man! Meat with tea! you'll die of eating too much.'

'No, Mr. Hunsden, I shall not.' I felt a necessity for contradicting him; I was irritated with hunger, and irritated at seeing him there, and irritated at the continued roughness of his manner.

'It is over-eating that makes you so ill-tempered,' said he.

'How do you know?' I demanded. 'It is like you to give a pragmatical opinion without being acquainted with any of the circumstances of the case; I have had no dinner.'

What I said was petulant and snappish enough, and Hunsden only replied by looking in my face and laughing.

'Poor thing!' he whined, after a pause. 'It has had no dinner, has it? What! I suppose its master would not let it come home. Did Crimsworth order you to fast by way of punishment, William?'

'No, Mr. Hunsden.' Fortunately, at this sulky juncture, tea was brought in, and I fell to upon some bread and butter and cold beef directly. Having cleared a plateful, I became so far humanized as to intimate to Mr. Hunsden 'that he need not sit there staring, but might come to the table and do as I did, if he liked.'

But I don't like in the least,' said he, and therewith he summoned the servant by a fresh pull of the bell-rope, and intimated a desire to have a glass of toast-and-water. 'And some more coal,' he added; 'Mr. Crimsworth shall keep a good fire while I stay.'

His orders being executed, he wheeled his chair round to the table, so as to be opposite me.'

'Well,' he proceeded. 'You are out of work, I suppose?'

'Yes,' said I; and not disposed to show the satisfaction I felt on this point, I, yielding to the whim of the moment, took up the subject as though I considered myself aggrieved rather than benefited by what had been done. 'Yes—thanks to you, I am. Crimsworth turned me off at a minute's notice, owing to some interference of yours at a public meeting, I understand.'

'Ah! what! he mentioned that? He observed me signalling the lads, did he? What had he to say about his friend Hunsden—anything sweet?'

'He called you a treacherous villain.'

'Oh, he hardly knows me yet! I'm one of those shy people who don't come out all at once, and he is only just beginning to make my acquaintance, but he'll find I've some good qualities—excellent ones! The Hunsdens were always unrivalled at tracking a rascal; a downright dishonourable villain is their natural prey—they could not keep off him wherever they met him; you used the word pragmatical just now—that word is the property of our family; it has been applied to us from generation to generation; we have fine noses for abuses: we scent a scoundrel a mile off; we are reformers born, radical reformers; and it was impossible for me to live in the same town with Crimsworth, to come into weekly contact with him, to witness some of his conduct to you (for whom personally I care nothing; I only consider the brutal injustice with which he violated your natural claim to equality)—I say it was impossible for me to be thus situated and not feel the angel or the demon of my race at work within me. I followed my instinct, opposed a tyrant, and broke a chain.'

Now this speech interested me much, both because it brought out Hunsden's character, and because it explained his motives; it interested me so much that I forgot to reply to it, and sat silent, pondering over a throng of ideas it had suggested.

'Are you grateful to me?' he asked, presently.

In fact I was grateful, or almost so, and I believe I half liked him at the moment, notwithstanding his proviso that what he had done was not out of regard for me. But human nature is perverse. Impossible to answer his blunt question in the affirmative, so I disclaimed all tendency to gratitude, and advised him, if he expected any reward for his championship, to look for it in a better world, as he was not likely to meet with it here. In reply he termed me 'a dry-hearted aristocratic scamp,' whereupon I again charged him with having taken the bread out of my mouth.

'Your bread was dirty, man!' cried Hunsden—'dirty and unwholesome! It came through the hands of a tyrant, for I tell you Crimsworth is a tyrant—a tyrant to his work-people, a tyrant to his clerks, and will some day be a tyrant to his wife.'

'Nonsense! bread is bread, and a salary is a salary. I've lost mine, and through your means.'

'There's sense in what you say, after all,' rejoined Hunsden. 'I must say I am rather agreeably surprised to hear you make so practical an observation as that last. I had imagined now, from my previous observation of your character, that the sentimental delight you would have taken in your newly-regained liberty would, for a while at least, have effaced all ideas of forethought and prudence. I think better of you for looking steadily to the needful.'

'Looking steadily to the needful! How can I do otherwise? I must live, and to live I must have what you call "the needful," which I can only get by working. I repeat it, you have taken my work from me.'

'What do you mean to do?' pursued Hunsden, coolly. 'You have influential relations; I suppose they'll soon provide you with another place?'

'Influential relations? Who? I should like to know their names.'

'The Seacombes.'

'Stuff! I have cut them.'

Hunsden looked at me incredulously.

'I have,' said I, 'and that definitively.'

'You must mean they have cut you, William.

'As you please. They offered me their patronage on condition of my entering the Church; I declined both the terms and the recompense; I withdrew from my cold uncles, and preferred throwing myself into my elder brother's arms, from whose affectionate embrace I am now torn by the cruel intermeddling of a stranger—of yourself, in short.'

I could not repress a half-smile as I said this; a similar demi-manifestation of feeling appeared at the same moment on Hunsden's lips.

'Oh, I see!' said he, looking into my eyes, and it was evident he *did* see right down into my heart. Having sat a minute or two with his chin resting on his hand, diligently occupied in the continued perusal of my countenance, he went on. 'Seriously, have you then nothing to expect from the Seacombes?'

'Yes, rejection and repulsion. Why do you ask me twice? How can hands stained with the ink of a counting-house, soiled with the grease of a wool-warehouse, ever again be permitted to come into contact with aristocratic palms?'

'There would be a difficulty, no doubt; still you are such a complete Seacombe in appearance, feature, language, almost manner, I wonder they should disown you.'

'They have disowned me; so talk no more about it.'

'Do you regret it, William?'

'No.'

'Why not, lad?'

'Because they are not people with whom I could ever have had any sympathy.'

'I say you are one of them.'

'That merely proves that you know nothing at all about it; I am my mother's son, but not my uncle's nephew.'

'Still, one of your uncles is a lord, though rather an obscure and not a very wealthy one, and the other a right honourable; you should consider worldly interest.'

'Nonsense, Mr. Hunsden. You know or may know that even had I desired to be submissive to my uncles, I could not have stooped with a good enough grace ever to have won their favour. I should have sacrificed my own comfort and not have gained their patronage in return.'

'Very likely—so you calculated your wisest plan was to follow your own devices at once?'

'Exactly. I must follow my own devices—I must till the day of my death; because I can neither comprehend, adopt, nor work out those of other people.'

Hunsden yawned. 'Well,' said he, 'in all this I see but one thing clearly—that is, that the whole affair is no business of mine.' He stretched himself and again yawned. 'I wonder what time it is,' he went on. 'I have an appointment for seven o'clock.'

'Three-quarters past six by my watch.'

'Well, then, I'll go.' He got up. 'You'll not meddle with trade again?' said he, leaning his elbow on the mantelpiece.

'No; I think not.'

'You would be a fool if you did. Probably, after all, you'll think better of your uncles' proposal, and go into the Church.'

'A singular regeneration must take place in my whole inner and outer man before I do that. A good clergyman is one of the best of men.'

'Indeed! Do you think so?' interrupted Hunsden, scoffingly.

'I do, and no mistake. But I have not the peculiar points which go to make a good clergyman; and rather than adopt a profession for which I have no vocation, I would endure extremities of hardship from poverty.'

'You're a mighty difficult customer to suit. You won't be a tradesman or a parson; you can't be a lawyer, or a doctor, or a gentleman, because you've no money. I'd recommend you to travel.'

'What! without money?'

'You must travel in search of money, man. You can speak French—with a vile English accent, no doubt—still, you can speak it. Go on to the Continent, and see what will turn up for you there.'

'God knows I should like to go!' exclaimed I, with involuntary ardour.

'Go: what the deuce hinders you? You may get to Brussels, for instance, for five or six pounds, if you know how to manage with economy.'

'Necessity would teach me if I didn't.'

'Go, then, and let your wits make a way for you when you get there. I know Brussels almost as well as I know X——, and I am sure it would suit such a one as you better than London.'

'But occupation, Mr. Hunsden! I must go where occupation is to be had; and how could I get recommendation, or introduction, or employment at Brussels?'

'There speaks the organ of caution. You hate to advance a step before you know every inch of the way. You haven't a sheet of paper and a pen-and-ink?'

'I hope so,' and I produced writing materials with alacrity; for I guessed what he was going to do. He sat down, wrote a few lines, folded, sealed, and addressed a letter, and held it out to me.

'There, Prudence, there's a pioneer to hew down the first rough difficulties of your path. I know well enough, lad, you are not one of those who will run their neck into a noose without seeing how they are to get it out again, and you're right there. A reckless man is my aversion, and nothing should ever persuade me to meddle with the concerns of such a one. Those who are reckless for themselves are generally ten times more so for their friends.'

'This is a letter of introduction, I suppose?' said I, taking the epistle.

'Yes. With that in your pocket you will run no risk of finding yourself in a state of absolute destitution, which, I know, you will regard as a degradation—so should I, for that matter. The person to whom you will present it generally has two or three respectable places depending upon his recommendation.'

'That will just suit me,' said I.

'Well, and where's your gratitude?' demanded Mr. Hunsden; 'don't you know how to say "Thank you?"'

'I've fifteen pounds and a watch, which my godmother, whom I never saw, gave me eighteen years ago,' was my rather irrevelant answer; and I further avowed myself a happy man, and professed that I did not envy any being in Christendom.

'And your gratitude?'

'I shall be off presently, Mr. Hunsden—to-morrow, if all be well: I'll not stay a day longer in X—— than I'm obliged.'

'Very good—but it will be decent to make due acknowledgment for the assistance you have received; be quick! It is just going to strike seven: I'm waiting to be thanked.'

'Just stand out of the way, will you, Mr. Hunsden: I want a key there is on the corner of the mantelpiece. I'll pack my portmanteau before I go to bed.'

The house clock struck seven.

'The lad is a heathen,' said Hunsden, and taking his hat from a sideboard, he left the room, laughing to himself. I had half an inclination to follow him: I really intended to leave X—— the next morning, and should certainly not have another opportunity of bidding him good-bye. The front door banged to.

'Let him go,' said I, 'we shall meet again some day.'

CHAPTER VII

Reader, perhaps you were never in Belgium. Haply you don't know the physiognomy of the country? You have not its lineaments defined upon your memory, as I have them on mine?

Three—nay, four—pictures line the four-walled cell where are stored for me the records of the past. First, Eton. All in that picture is in far perspective, receding, diminutive; but freshly coloured, green, dewy, with a spring sky, piled with glittering yet showery clouds; for my childhood was not all sunshine—it had its overcast, its cold, its stormy hours. Second, X——, huge, dingy; the canvas cracked and smoked; a yellow sky, sooty clouds; no sun, no azure; the verdure of the suburbs blighted and sullied—a very dreary scene.

Third, Belgium; and I will pause before this landscape. As to the fourth, a curtain covers it, which I may hereafter withdraw, or may not, as suits my convenience and capacity. At any rate, for the present, it must hang undisturbed. Belgium! name unromantic and unpoetic, yet name that whenever uttered has in my ear a sound, in my heart an echo, such as no other assemblage of syllables, however sweet or classic, can produce. Belgium! I repeat the word, now as I sit alone near midnight. It stirs my world of the past like a summons to resurrection; the graves unclose, the dead are raised; thoughts, feelings, memories that slept, are seen by me ascending from the clods—haloed most of them—but while I gaze on their vapoury forms, and strive to ascertain definitely their outline, the sound which wakened them dies, and they sink, each and all, like a light wreath of mist, absorbed in the mould, recalled to urns, resealed in monuments. Farewell, luminous phantoms!

This is Belgium, reader. Look! don't call the picture a flat or a dull one—it was neither flat nor dull to me when I first beheld it. When I left Ostend on a mild February morning, and found myself on the road to Brussels, nothing could look vapid to me. My sense of enjoyment possessed an edge whetted to the finest, untouched, keen, exquisite. I was young; I had good health; pleasure and I had never met; no indulgence of hers had enervated, or sated one faculty of my nature. Liberty I clasped in my arms for the first time, and the influence of her smile and embrace revived my life like the sun and the west wind. Yes, at that epoch I felt like a morning traveller who doubts not that from the hill he is ascending he shall behold a glorious sunrise; what if the track be straight, steep, and stony? he sees it not: his eyes are fixed on that summit, flushed already, flushed and gilded, and having gained it he is certain of the scene beyond. He knows that the sun will face him, that his chariot is even now coming over the eastern horizon, and that the herald breeze he feels on his cheek is opening for the god's career a clear, vast path of azure, amidst clouds soft as pearl and warm as flame. Difficulty and toil were to be my lot, but sustained by energy, drawn on by hopes as bright as vague, I deemed such a lot no hardship. I mounted now the hill in shade: there were pebbles, inequalities, briers in my path, but my eyes were fixed on the crimson peak above; my imagination was with the refulgent firmament beyond, and I thought nothing of the stones turning under my feet, or of the thorns scratching my face and hands.

I gazed often, and always with delight, from the window of the diligence (these, be it remembered, were not the days of trains and railroads). Well! and what did I see? I will tell you faithfully. Green, reedy swamps; fields fertile but flat, cultivated in patches that made them look like magnified kitchen-gardens; belts of cut trees, formal as pollard willows, skirting the horizon; narrow canals, gliding slow by the road-side; painted Flemish farm-houses; some very dirty hovels; a grey, dead sky; wet road, wet fields, wet house-tops; not a beautiful, scarcely a picturesque object met my eye along the whole route; yet to me, all was beautiful, all was more than picturesque. It continued fair so long as daylight lasted, though the moisture of many preceding damp days had sodden the whole country; as it grew dark, however, the rain recommenced, and it was through streaming and starless darkness my eye caught the first gleam of the lights of Brussels. I saw little of the city but its lights that night. Having alighted from the diligence, a fiacre conveyed me to the Hôtel de ——, where I had been advised by a fellow-traveller to put up; having eaten a traveller's supper, I retired to bed, and slept a traveller's sleep.

Next morning I awoke from prolonged and sound repose with the impression that I was yet in X——, and perceiving it to be broad daylight I started up, imagining that I had overslept myself, and should be behind time at the counting-house. The momentary and painful sense of restraint vanished before the revived and reviving consciousness of freedom, as, throwing back the white curtains of my bed, I looked forth into a wide, lofty foreign chamber; how different from the small and dingy, though not uncomfortable, apartment I had occupied for a night or two at a respectable inn in London while waiting for the sailing of the packet! Yet far be it from me to profane the memory of that little dingy room! It, too, is dear to my soul; for there, as I lay in quiet and darkness, I first heard the great bell of St. Paul's telling London it was midnight, and well do I recall the deep, deliberate tones, so full charged with colossal phlegm and force. From the small, narrow window of that room, I first saw *the* dome, looming through a London mist. I suppose the sensations, stirred by those first sounds, first sights, are felt but once; treasure them, Memory; seal them in urns, and keep them in safe niches! Well—I rose. Travellers talk of the apartments in foreign dwellings being bare and uncomfortable; I thought my chamber looked stately and cheerful. It had such large windows—*croisées* that opened like doors, with such broad, clear panes of glass; such a great looking-glass stood on my dressing-table—such a fine mirror glittered over the mantelpiece—the painted floor looked so clean and glossy; when I had dressed and was descending the stairs, the broad marble steps almost awed me, and so did the lofty hall into which they conducted. On the first landing I met a Flemish housemaid: she had wooden shoes, a short red petticoat, a printed cotton bedgown, her face was broad, her physiognomy eminently stupid; when I spoke to her in French, she answered me in Flemish, with an air the reverse of civil; yet I thought her charming; if she was not pretty or polite, she was, I conceived, very picturesque; she reminded me of the female figures in certain Dutch paintings I had seen in other years at Seacombe Hall.

I repaired to the public room; that, too, was very large and very lofty, and warmed by a stove; the floor was black, and the stove was black, and most of the furniture was black: yet I never experienced a freer sense of exhilaration than when I sat down at a very long black table (covered, however, in part by a white cloth), and, having ordered breakfast, began to pour out my coffee from a little black coffee-pot. The stove might be dismal-looking to some eyes, not to mine, but it was indisputably very warm, and there were two gentlemen seated by it talking in French; impossible to follow their rapid utterance, or comprehend much of the purport of what they said—yet French, in the mouths of Frenchmen, or Belgians (I was not then sensible of the horrors of the Belgian accent) was as music to my ears. One of these gentlemen presently discerned me to be an Englishman—no doubt from the fashion in which I addressed the waiter; for I would persist in speaking French in my execrable South of England style, though the man understood English. The gentleman, after looking towards me once or twice, politely accosted me in very good English; I remember I wished to God that I could speak French as well; his fluency and correct pronunciation impressed me for the first time with a due notion of the cosmopolitan character of the capital I was in; it was my first experience of that skill in living languages I afterwards found to be so general in Brussels.

I lingered over my breakfast as long as I could; while it was there on the table, and while that stranger continued talking to me, I was a free, independent traveller; but at last the things were removed, the two gentlemen left the room; suddenly the illusion ceased, reality and business came back. I, a bondsman just released from the yoke, freed for one week from twenty-one years of constraint, must, of necessity, resume the fetters of dependency. Hardly had I tasted the delight of being without a master when duty issued her stern mandate: 'Go forth and seek another service.' I never linger over a painful and necessary task; I never take pleasure before business, it is not in my nature to do so; impossible to enjoy a leisurely walk over the city, though I perceived the morning was very fine, until I had first presented Mr. Hunsden's letter of introduction, and got fairly on to the track of a new situation. Wrenching my mind from liberty and delight, I seized my hat, and forced my reluctant body out of the Hôtel de —— into the foreign street.

It was a fine day, but I would not look at the blue sky or at the stately houses round me; my mind was bent on one thing, finding out 'Mr. Brown, Numero —, Rue Royale,' for so my letter was addressed. By dint of inquiry I succeeded; I stood at last at the desired door, knocked, asked for Mr. Brown, and was admitted.

Being shown into a small breakfast-room, I found myself in the presence of an elderly gentleman—very grave, business-like, and respectable-looking. I presented Mr. Hunsden's letter; he received me very civilly. After a little desultory conversation he asked me if there was anything in which his advice or experience could be of use. I said, 'Yes,' and then proceeded to tell him that I was not a gentleman of fortune, travelling for pleasure, but an ex-counting-house clerk, who wanted employment of some kind, and that immediately too. He replied that as a friend of Mr. Hunsden's he would be willing to assist me as well as he could. After some meditation he named a place in a mercantile house at Liège, and another in a bookseller's shop at Louvain.

'Clerk and shopman!' murmured I to myself. 'No.' I shook my head. I had tried the high stool; I hated it; I believed there were other occupations that would suit me better; besides, I did not wish to leave Brussels.

'I know of no place in Brussels,' answered Mr. Brown, 'unless indeed you were disposed to turn your attention to teaching. I am acquainted with the director of a large establishment who is in want of a professor of English and Latin.'

I thought two minutes, then I seized the idea eagerly.

'The very thing, sir!' said I.

'But,' asked he, 'do you understand French well enough to teach Belgian boys English?'

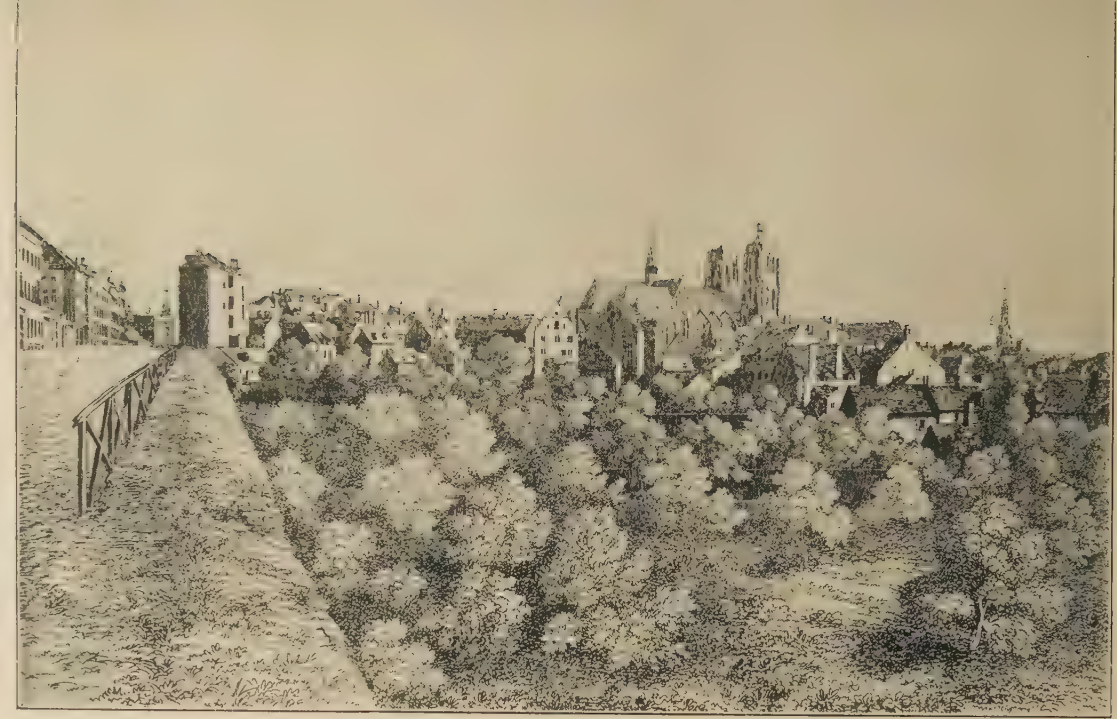
Fortunately I could answer this question in the affirmative; having studied French under a Frenchman, I could speak the language intelligibly though not fluently. I could also read it well, and write it decently.

'Then,' pursued Mr. Brown, 'I think I can promise you the place, for Monsieur Pelet will not refuse a professor recommended by me; but come here again at five o'clock this afternoon, and I will introduce you to him.'

The word 'professor' struck me. 'I am not a professor,' said I.

'Oh,' returned Mr. Brown, 'professor, here in Belgium, means a teacher, that is all.'

My conscience thus quieted, I thanked Mr. Brown, and, for the present, withdrew. This time I stepped out into the street with a relieved heart; the task I had imposed on



BRUSSELS FROM THE RUE ROYALE.

From an etching by Lieut.-Col. Batty, made in 1830.

myself for that day was executed. I might now take some hours of holiday. I felt free to look up. For the first time I remarked the sparkling clearness of the air, the deep blue of the sky, the gay, clean aspect of the whitewashed or painted houses; I saw what a fine street was the Rue Royale, and, walking leisurely along its broad pavement, I continued to survey its stately hotels, till the palisades, the gates, and trees of the park appearing in sight, offered to my eye a new attraction. I remember, before entering the park, I stood awhile to contemplate the statue of General Belliard, and then I advanced to the top of the great staircase just beyond, and I looked down into a narrow back street, which I afterwards learnt was called the Rue d'Isabelle. I well recollect that my eye rested on the green door of a rather large house opposite, where, on a brass plate, was inscribed, 'Pensionnat de Demoiselles.' Pensionnat! The word excited an uneasy sensation in my mind; it seemed to speak of restraint. Some of the demoiselles, externats no doubt, were at that moment issuing from the door—I looked for a pretty face amongst them, but their close little French bonnets hid their features; in a moment they were gone.

I had traversed a good deal of Brussels before five o'clock arrived, but punctually as that hour struck I was again in the Rue Royale. Re-admitted to Mr. Brown's breakfast-room, I found him, as before, seated at the table, and he was not alone—a gentleman stood by the hearth. Two words of introduction designated him as my future master. 'M. Pelet, Mr. Crimsworth; Mr. Crimsworth, M. Pelet.' A bow on each side finished the ceremony. I don't know what sort of a bow I made; an ordinary one, I suppose, for I was in a tranquil, commonplace frame of mind; I felt none of the agitation which had troubled my first interview with Edward Crimsworth. M. Pelet's bow was extremely polite, yet not theatrical, scarcely French; he and I were presently seated opposite to each other. In a pleasing voice, low, and, out of consideration to my foreign ears, very distinct and deliberate,

M. Pelet intimated that he had just been receiving from 'le respectable M. Brown,' an account of my attainments and character, which relieved him from all scruple as to the propriety of engaging me as professor of English and Latin in his establishment; nevertheless, for form's sake, he would put a few questions to test my powers. He did, and expressed in flattering terms his satisfaction at my answers. The subject of salary next came on; it was fixed at one thousand francs per annum, besides board and lodging. 'And in addition,' suggested M. Pelet, 'as there will be some hours in each day during which your services will not be required in my establishment, you may, in time, obtain employment in other seminaries, and thus turn your vacant moments to profitable account.'

I thought this very kind, and indeed I found afterwards that the terms on which M. Pelet had engaged me were really liberal for Brussels; instruction being extremely cheap there on account of the number of teachers. It was further arranged that I should be installed in my new post the very next day, after which M. Pelet and I parted.

Well, and what was he like? and what were my impressions concerning him? He was a man of about forty years of age, of middle size, and rather emaciated figure; his face was pale, his cheeks were sunk, and his eyes hollow; his features were pleasing and regular, they had a French turn (for M. Pelet was no Fleming, but a Frenchman both by birth and parentage), yet the degree of harshness inseparable from Gallic lineaments was, in his case, softened by a mild blue eye, and a melancholy, almost suffering, expresssion of countenance; his physiognomy was 'fine et spirituelle.' I use two French words because they define better than any English terms the species of intelligence with which his features were imbued. He was altogether an interesting and prepossessing personage. I wondered only at the utter absence of all the ordinary characteristics of his profession, and almost feared he could not be stern and resolute enough for a schoolmaster. Externally at least

M. Pelet presented an absolute contrast to my late master, Edward Crimsworth.

Influenced by the impression I had received of his gentleness, I was a good deal surprised when, on arriving the next day at my new employer's house, and being admitted to a first view of what was to be the sphere of my future labours, namely, the large, lofty, and well-lighted schoolrooms, I beheld a numerous assemblage of pupils, boys of course, whose collective appearance showed all the signs of a full, flourishing, and well-disciplined seminary. As I traversed the classes in company with M. Pelet, a profound silence reigned on all sides, and if by chance a murmur or a whisper arose, one glance from the pensive eye of this most gentle pedagogue stilled it instantly. It was astonishing, I thought, how so mild a check could prove so effectual. When I had perambulated the length and breadth of the classes, M. Pelet turned and said to me—

'Would you object to taking the boys as they are, and testing their proficiency in English?'

The proposal was unexpected. I had thought I should have been allowed at least a day to prepare; but it is a bad omen to commence any career by hesitation, so I just stepped to the professor's desk near which we stood, and faced the circle of my pupils. I took a moment to collect my thoughts, and likewise to frame in French the sentence by which I proposed to open business. I made it as short as possible:—'Messieurs, prenez vos livres de lecture.'

'Anglais ou Français, Monsieur?' demanded a thick-set, moon-faced young Flamand in a blouse. The answer was fortunately easy:—'Anglais.'

I determined to give myself as little trouble as possible in this lesson; it would not do yet to trust my unpractised tongue with the delivery of explanations; my accent and idiom would be too open to the criticisms of the young gentlemen before me, relative to whom I felt already it would be necessary at once to take up an advantageous position, and I proceeded to employ means accordingly.

'Commencez!' cried I, when they had all produced their books. The moon-faced youth (by name Jules Vanderkelkov, as I afterwards learnt) took the first sentence. The 'livre de lecture' was the 'Vicar of Wakefield,' much used in foreign schools because it is supposed to contain prime samples of conversational English; it might, however, have been a Runic scroll for any resemblance the words, as enunciated by Jules, bore to the language in ordinary use amongst the natives of Great Britain. My God! how he did snuffle, snort, and wheeze! All he said was said in his throat and nose, for it is thus the Flamands speak, but I heard him to the end of his paragraph without proffering a word of correction, whereat he looked vastly self-complacent, convinced, no doubt, that he had acquitted himself like a real born and bred 'Anglais.' In the same unmoved silence I listened to a dozen in rotation, and when the twelfth had concluded with splutter, hiss, and mumble, I solemnly laid down the book.

'Arrêtez!' said I. There was a pause, during which I regarded them all with a steady and somewhat stern gaze: a dog, if stared at hard enough and long enough, will show symptoms of embarrassment, and so at length did my bench of Belgians. Perceiving that some of the faces before me were beginning to look sullen, and others ashamed, I slowly joined my hands, and ejaculated in a deep 'voix de poitrine'—'Comme c'est affreux!'

They looked at each other, pouted, coloured, swung their heels; they were not pleased, I saw, but they were impressed, and in the way I wished them to be. Having thus taken them down a peg in their self-conceit, the next step was to raise myself in their estimation; not a very easy thing, considering that I hardly dared to speak for fear of betraying my own deficiencies.

'Ecoutez, Messieurs!' said I, and I endeavoured to throw into my accents the compassionate tone of a superior being, who, touched by the extremity of the helplessness, which at first only excited his scorn, deigns at length to bestow aid. I then began at the very beginning of the 'Vicar of Wakefield,' and read, in a slow, distinct voice, some twenty pages, they all the while sitting mute and listening with fixed attention; by the time I had done nearly an hour had elapsed. I then rose and said:—"C'est assez pour aujourd'hui, Messieurs; demain nous recommencerons, et j'espère que tout ira bien.'

With this oracular sentence I bowed, and in company with M. Pelet quitted the schoolroom.

'C'est bien! c'est très bien!' said my principal as we entered his parlour. 'Je vois que monsieur a de l'adresse; cela me plaît, car, dans l'instruction, l'adresse fait tout autant que le savoir.'

From the parlour M. Pelet conducted me to my apartment, my 'chambre,' as Monsieur said with a certain air of complacency. It was a very small room, with an excessively small bed, but M. Pelet gave me to understand that I was to occupy it quite alone, which was of course a great comfort. Yet, though so limited in dimensions, it had two windows. Light not being taxed in Belgium, the people never grudge its admission into their houses; just here, however, this observation is not very *à propos*, for one of these windows was boarded up; the open window looked into the boys' playground. I glanced at the other, as wondering what aspect it would present if disencumbered of the boards. M. Pelet read, I suppose, the expression of my eye; he explained:—'La fenêtre fermée donne sur un jardin appartenant à un pensionnat de demoiselles,' said he, 'et les convenances exigent—enfin, vous comprenez—n'est-ce pas, Monsieur?'

'Oui, oui,' was my reply, and I looked of course quite satisfied; but when M. Pelet had retired and closed the door after him, the first thing I did was to scrutinise closely the nailed boards, hoping to find some chink or crevice which I might enlarge, and so get a peep at the consecrated ground. My researches were vain, for the boards were well joined and strongly nailed. It is astonishing how disappointed I felt. I thought it would have been so pleasant to have looked out upon a garden planted with flowers and trees, so amusing to have watched the demoiselles at their play; to have studied female character in a variety of phases, myself the while sheltered from view by a modest muslin curtain, whereas, owing doubtless to the absurd scruples of some old duenna of a directress, I had now only the option of looking at a bare gravelled court, with an enormous 'pas de géant' in the middle, and the monotonous walls and windows of a boys' school-house round. Not only then, but many a time after, especially in moments of weariness and low spirits, did I look with dissatisfied eyes on that most tantalising board, longing to tear it away and get a glimpse of the green region which I imagined to lie beyond. I knew a tree grew close up to the window, for though there were as yet no leaves to rustle, I often heard at night the tapping of branches against the panes. In the daytime, when I listened attentively, I could hear, even through the boards, the voices of the demoiselles in their hours of recreation, and, to speak the honest truth, my sentimental reflections were occasionally a trifle disarranged by the not quite silvery, in fact the too often brazen sounds, which, rising from the unseen paradise below, penetrated clamorously into my solitude. Not to mince matters, it really seemed to me a doubtful case whether the lungs of Mdlle. Reuter's girls or those of M. Pelet's boys were the strongest, and when it came to shrieking the girls indisputably beat the boys hollow. I forgot to say, by-the-by, that Reuter was the name of the old lady who had had my window boarded up. I say old, for such I, of course, concluded her to be, judging from her cautious, chaperon-like proceedings; besides, nobody ever spoke of her as young. I remember I was very much amused when I first heard her Christian name; it was Zoraïde—Mademoiselle Zoraïde Reuter. But the continental nations do allow themselves vagaries in the choice of names, such as we sober English never run into. I think, indeed, we have too limited a list to choose from.

Meantime my path was gradually growing smooth before me. I, in a few weeks, conquered the teasing difficulties inseparable from the commencement of almost every career. Ere long I had acquired as much facility in speaking French as set me at my ease with my pupils; and as I had encountered them on a right footing at the very beginning, and continued tenaciously to retain the advantage I had early gained, they never attempted mutiny, which circumstance, all who are in any degree acquainted with the ongoings of Belgian schools, and who know the relation in which professors and pupils too frequently stand towards each other in those establishments, will consider an important and uncommon one. Before concluding this chapter I will say a word on the system I pursued with regard to my classes: my experience may possibly be of use to others.

It did not require very keen observation to detect the character of the youth of Brabant, but it needed a certain degree of tact to adopt one's measures to their capacity. Their intellectual faculties were generally weak, their animal propensities strong; thus there was at once an impotence and a kind of inert force in their natures; they were dull, but they were also singularly stubborn, heavy as lead and, like lead, most difficult to move. Such being the case, it would have been truly absurd to exact from them much in the way of mental exertion; having short memories, dense intelligence, feeble reflective powers, they recoiled with repugnance from any occupation that demanded close study or deep thought. Had the abhorred effort been extorted from them by injudicious and arbitrary measures on the part of the professor, they would have resisted as obstinately, as clamorously, as desperate swine; and though not brave singly, they were relentless acting *en masse*.

I understood that before my arrival in M. Pelet's establishment the combined insubordination of the pupils had effected the dismissal of more than one English master. It was necessary, then, to exact only the most moderate application from natures so little qualified to apply—to assist, in every practicable way, understandings so opaque and contracted—to be ever gentle, considerate, yielding even, to a certain point, with dispositions so irrationally perverse; but, having reached that culminating point of indulgence, you must fix your foot, plant it, root it in rock—become immutable as the towers of St. Gudule; for a step—but half a step farther, and you would plunge headlong into the gulf of imbecility; there lodged, you would speedily receive proofs of Flemish gratitude and magnanimity in showers of Brabant saliva and handfuls of Low Country mud. You might smooth to the utmost the path of learning, remove every pebble from the track; but then you must finally insist with decision on the pupil taking your arm and allowing himself to be led quietly along the prepared road. When I had brought down my lesson to the lowest level of my dullest pupil's capacity—when I had shown myself the mildest, the most tolerant of masters—a word of impertinence, a movement of disobedience, changed me at once into a despot. I offered then but one alternative—submission and acknowledgment of error, or ignominious expulsion. This system answered, and my influence, by degrees, became established on a firm basis. 'The boy is father to the man,' it is said; and so I often thought when I looked at my boys and remembered the political history of their ancestors. Pelet's school was merely an epitome of the Belgian nation.

CHAPTER VIII

And Pelet himself? How did I continue to like him? Oh, extremely well! Nothing could be more smooth, gentlemanlike, and even friendly, than his demeanour to me. I had to endure from him neither cold neglect, irritating interference, nor pretentious assumption of superiority. I fear, however, two poor, hard-worked Belgian ushers in the establishment could not have said as much; to them the director's manner was invariably dry, stern, and cool. I believe he perceived once or twice that I was a little shocked at the difference he made between them and me, and accounted for it by saying, with a quiet sarcastic smile—'Ce ne sont que des Flamands—allez!'

And then he took his cigar gently from his lips and spat on the painted floor of the room in which we were sitting. Flamands certainly they were, and both had the true Flamand physiognomy, where intellectual inferiority is marked in lines none can mistake; still they were men, and, in the main, honest men; and I could not see why their being aboriginals of the flat, dull soil should serve as a pretext for treating them with perpetual severity and contempt. This idea of injustice somewhat poisoned the pleasure I might otherwise have derived from Pelet's soft, affable manner to myself. Certainly it was agreeable, when the day's work was over, to find one's employer an intelligent and cheerful companion; and if he was sometimes a little sarcastic and sometimes a little too insinuating, and if I did discover that his mildness was more a matter of appearance than of reality—if I did occasionally suspect the existence of flint or steel under an external covering of velvet—still we are none of us perfect; and weary as I was of the atmosphere of brutality and insolence in which I had constantly lived at X——, I had no inclination now, on casting anchor in calmer regions, to institute at once a prying search after defects that were scrupulously withdrawn and carefully veiled from my view. I was willing to take Pelet for what he seemed—to believe him benevolent and friendly until some untoward event should prove him otherwise. He was not married, and I soon perceived he had all a Frenchman's, all a Parisian's notions about matrimony and women. I suspected a degree of laxity in his code of morals, there was something so cold and *blasé* in his tone whenever he alluded to what he called 'le beau sexe'; but he was too gentlemanlike to intrude topics I did not invite, and as he was really intelligent and really fond of intellectual subjects of discourse, he and I always found enough to talk about, without seeking themes in the mire. I hated his fashion of mentioning love; I abhorred, from my soul, mere licentiousness. He felt the difference of our notions, and, by mutual consent, we kept off ground debatable.

Pelet's house was kept and his kitchen managed by his mother, a real old Frenchwoman; she had been handsome—at least she told me so, and I strove to believe her; she was now ugly, as only continental old women can be; perhaps, though, her style of dress made her look uglier than she really was. Indoors she would go about without cap, her grey hair strangely dishevelled; then, when at home, she seldom wore a gown—only a shabby cotton camisole; shoes, too, were strangers to her feet, and in lieu of them she sported roomy slippers, trodden down at the heels. On the other hand, whenever it was her pleasure to appear abroad, as on Sundays and fête-days, she would put on some very brilliant-coloured dress, usually of thin texture, a silk bonnet with a wreath of flowers, and a very fine shawl. She was not, in the main, an ill-natured old woman, but an incessant and most indiscreet talker; she kept chiefly in and about the kitchen, and seemed rather to avoid her son's august presence; of him, indeed, she evidently stood in awe. When he reproved her, his reproofs were bitter and unsparing; but he seldom gave himself that trouble.

Madame Pelet had her own society, her own circle of chosen visitors, whom, however, I seldom saw, as she generally entertained them in what she called her 'cabinet,' a small den of a place adjoining the kitchen, and descending into it by one or two steps. On these steps, by-the-by, I have not unfrequently seen Madame Pelet seated with a trencher on her knee, engaged in the threefold employment of eating her dinner, gossiping with her favourite servant, the housemaid, and scolding her antagonist, the cook; she never dined, and seldom indeed took any meal with her son; and as to showing her face at the boys' table, that was quite out of the question. These details will sound very odd in English ears, but Belgium is not England, and its ways are not our ways.

Madame Pelet's habits of life, then, being taken into consideration, I was a good deal surprised when, one Thursday evening (Thursday was always a half-holiday), as I was sitting all alone in my apartment, correcting a huge pile of English and Latin exercises, a servant tapped at the door, and, on its being opened, presented Madame Pelet's compliments, and she would be happy to see me to take my 'goûter' (a meal which answers to our English 'tea') with her in the dining-room.

'Plaît-il?' said I, for I thought I must have misunderstood, the message and invitation were so unusual; the same words were repeated. I accepted, of course, and as I descended the stairs, I wondered what whim had entered the old lady's brain; her son was out—gone to pass the evening at the Salle of the Grande Harmonie or some other club of which he was a member. Just as I laid my hand on the handle of the dining-room door, a queer idea glanced across my mind.

'Surely she's not going to make love to me,' said I. 'I've heard of old Frenchwomen doing odd things in that line: and the goûter? They generally begin such affairs with eating and drinking, I believe.'

There was a fearful dismay in this suggestion of my excited imagination, and if I had allowed myself time to dwell upon it, I should no doubt have cut there and then, rushed back to my chamber, and bolted myself in; but whenever a danger or a horror is veiled with uncertainty, the primary wish of the mind is to ascertain first the naked truth, reserving the expedient of flight for the moment when its dread anticipation shall be realised. I turned the door-handle, and in an instant had crossed the fatal threshold, closed the door behind me, and stood in the presence of Madame Pelet.

'Gracious heavens! The first view of her seemed to confirm my worst apprehensions. There she sat, dressed out in a light green muslin gown, on her head a lace cap with flourishing red roses in the frill; her table was carefully spread; there were fruit, cakes, and coffee, with a bottle of something—I did not know what. Already the cold sweat started on my brow, already I glanced back over my shoulder at the closed door, when, to my unspeakable relief, my eye, wandering wildly in the direction of the stove, rested upon a second figure, seated in a large fauteuil beside it This was a woman, too, and, moreover, an old woman, and as fat and as rubicund as Madame Pelet was meagre and yellow; her attire was likewise very fine, and spring flowers of different hues circled in a bright wreath the crown of her violet-coloured velvet bonnet.

I had only time to make these general observations when Madame Pelet, coming forward with what she intended should be a graceful and elastic step, thus accosted me: 'Monsieur is indeed most obliging to quit his books, his studies, at the request of an insignificant person like me—will Monsieur complete his kindness by allowing me to present him to my dear friend Madame Reuter, who resides in the neighbouring house—the young ladies' school?'

'Ah!' thought I, 'I knew she was old,' and I bowed and took my seat. Madame Reuter placed herself at the table opposite to me.

'How do you like Belgium, Monsieur?' asked she, in an accent of the broadest Bruxellois. I could now well distinguish the difference between the fine and pure Parisian utterance of M. Pelet, for instance, and the guttural enunciation of the Flamands. I answered politely, and then wondered how so coarse and clumsy an old woman as the one before me should be at the head of a ladies' seminary which I had always heard spoken of in terms of high commendation. In truth there was something to wonder at. Madame Reuter looked more like a joyous, free-living old Flemish fermière, or even a maîtresse d'auberge, than a staid, grave, rigid directrice de pensionnat. In general the continental, or at least the Belgian old women, permit themselves a licence of manners, speech, and aspect, such as our venerable grand-dames would recoil from as absolutely disreputable, and Madame Reuter's jolly face bore evidence that she was no exception to the rule of her country; there was a twinkle and leer in her left eye; her right she kept habitually half shut, which I thought very odd indeed. After several vain attempts to comprehend the motives of these two droll old creatures for inviting me to join them at their goûter, I at last fairly gave it up, and resigning myself to inevitable mystification, I sat and looked first at one, then at the other, taking care meantime to do justice to the confitures, cakes, and coffee, with which they amply supplied me. They, too, ate, and that with no delicate appetite, and having demolished a large portion of the solids, they proposed a 'petit verre.' I declined. Not so Mesdames Pelet and Reuter; each mixed herself what I thought rather a stiff tumbler of punch, and placing it on a stand near the stove, they drew up their chairs to that convenience, and invited me to do the same. I obeyed; and being seated fairly between them, I was thus addressed first by Madame Pelet, then by Madame Reuter,—

'We will now speak of business,' said Madame Pelet, and she went on to make an elaborate speech, which, being interpreted, was to the effect that she had asked for the pleasure of my company that evening in order to give her friend Madame Reuter an opportunity of broaching an important proposal, which might turn out greatly to my advantage.

'Pourvu que vous soyez sage,' said Madame Reuter, 'et à vrai dire, vous en avez bien l'air. Take one drop of the punch' (or ponche, as she pronounced it); 'it is an agreeable and wholesome beverage after a full meal.'

I bowed, but again declined it. She went on: 'I feel,' said she, after a solemn sip—'I feel profoundly the importance of the commission with which my dear daughter has entrusted me, for you are aware, Monsieur, that it is my daughter who directs the establishment in the next house?'

'Ah! I thought it was yourself, Madame.' Though, indeed, at that moment I recollected that it was called Mademoiselle, not Madame Reuter's pensionnat.

'I! oh, no! I manage the house and look after the servants, as my friend Madame Pelet does for Monsieur her son—nothing more. Ah! you thought I gave lessons in class—did you?'

And she laughed loud and long, as though the idea tickled her fancy amazingly.

'Madame is in the wrong to laugh,' I observed; 'if she does not give lessons, I am sure it is not because she cannot;' and I whipped out a white pocket-handkerchief and wafted it, with a French grace, past my nose, bowing at the same time.

'Quel charmant jeune homme!' murmured Madame Pelet in a low voice. Madame Reuter, being less sentimental, as she was Flamand and not French, only laughed again.

'You are a dangerous person, I fear,' said she; 'if you can forge compliments at that rate, Zoraïde will positively be afraid of you; but if you are good, I will keep your secret, and not tell her how well you can flatter. Now, listen what sort of a proposal she makes to you. She has heard that you are an excellent professor, and as she wishes to get the very best masters for her school (car Zoraïde fait tout comme une reine, c'est une véritable maîtresse-femme), she has commissioned me to step over this afternoon, and sound Madame Pelet as to the possibility of engaging you. Zoraïde is a wary general; she never advances without first examining well her ground. I don't think she would be pleased if she knew I had already disclosed her intentions to you; she did not order me to go so far, but I thought there would be no harm in letting you into the secret, and Madame Pelet was of the same opinion. Take care, however, you don't betray either of us to Zoraïde—to my daughter, I mean; she is so discreet and circumspect herself, she cannot understand that one should find a pleasure in gossiping a little——'

'C'est absolument comme mon fils!' cried Madame Pelet.

'All the world is so changed since our girlhood!' rejoined the other: 'young people have such old heads now. But to return, Monsieur. Madame Pelet will mention the subject of your giving lessons in my daughter's establishment to her son, and he will speak to you; and then to-morrow, you will step over to our house, and ask to see my daughter, and you will introduce the subject as if the first intimation of it had reached you from M. Pelet himself, and be sure you never mention my name, for I would not displease Zoraïde on any account.'

'Bien! bien!' interrupted I—for all this chatter and circumlocution began to bore me very much; 'I will consult M. Pelet, and the thing shall be settled as you desire. Good evening, Mesdames—I am infinitely obliged to you.'

'Comment! vous vous en allez déjà?' exclaimed Madame Pelet.

'Prenez encore quelquechose, Monsieur; une pomme cuite, des biscuits, encore une tasse de café?'

'Merci, merci, Madame—au revoir.' And I backed at last out of the apartment.

Having regained my own room, I set myself to turn over in my mind the incident of the evening. It seemed a queer affair altogether, and queerly managed; the two old women had made quite a little intricate mess of it; still I found that the uppermost feeling in my mind on the subject was one of satisfaction. In the first place it would be a change to give lessons in another seminary, and then to teach young ladies would be an occupation so interesting—to be admitted at all into a ladies' boarding-school would be an incident so new in my life. 'Besides,' thought I, as I glanced at the boarded window, 'I shall now at last see the mysterious garden: I shall gaze both on the angels and their Eden.'

CHAPTER IX

M. Pelet could not of course object to the proposal made by Mdlle. Reuter; permission to accept such additional employment, should it offer, having formed an article of the terms on which he had engaged me. It was, therefore, arranged in the course of next day that I should be at liberty to give lessons in Mdlle. Reuter's establishment four afternoons in every week.

When evening came I prepared to step over in order to seek a conference with Mademoiselle herself on the subject: I had not had time to pay the visit before, having been all day closely occupied in class. I remember very well that before quitting my chamber I held a brief debate with myself as to whether I should change my ordinary attire for something smarter. At last I concluded it would be a waste of labour. 'Doubtless,' thought I, 'she is some stiff old maid; for though the daughter of Madame Reuter, she may well number upwards of forty winters; besides, if it were otherwise, if she be both young and pretty, I am not handsome, and no dressing can make me so, therefore I'll go as I am.' And off I started, cursorily glancing sideways as I passed the toilet-table, surmounted by a looking-glass: a thin, irregular face I saw, with sunk, dark eyes under a large, square forehead, complexion destitute of bloom or attraction; something young, but not youthful, no object to win a lady's love, no butt for the shafts of Cupid.

I was soon at the entrance of the pensionnat, in a moment I had pulled the bell; in another moment the door was opened, and within appeared a passage paved alternately with black and white marble; the walls were painted in imitation of marble also; and at the far end opened a glass door, through which I saw shrubs and a grass-plat, looking pleasant in the sunshine of the mild spring evening—for it was now the middle of April.

This, then, was my first glimpse of *the* garden; but I had not time to look long: the portress, after having answered in the affirmative my question as to whether her mistress was at home, opened the folding-doors of a room to the left, and having ushered me in, closed them behind me. I found myself in a salon with a very well-painted, highly varnished floor; chairs and sofas covered with white draperies, a green porcelain stove, walls hung with pictures in gilt frames, a gilt pendule and other ornaments on the mantelpiece, a large lustre pendent from the centre of the ceiling, mirrors, consoles, muslin curtains, and a handsome centre table completed the inventory of furniture. All looked extremely clean and glittering, but the general effect would have been somewhat chilling had not a second large pair of folding-doors, standing wide open, and disclosing another and smaller salon, more snugly furnished, offered some relief to the eye. This room was carpeted, and therein was a piano, a couch, a chiffonnière—above all, it contained a lofty window with a crimson curtain, which, being undrawn, afforded another glimpse of the garden, through the large, clear panes, round which some leaves of ivy, some tendrils of vine were trained.

'Monsieur Creemsvort, n'est-ce pas?' said a voice behind me; and, starting involuntarily, I turned. I had been so taken up with the contemplation of the pretty little salon that I had not noticed the entrance of a person into the larger room. It was, however, Mdlle. Reuter who now addressed me, and stood close beside me; and when I had bowed with instantaneously recovered sang-froid—for I am not easily embarrassed—I commenced the conversation by remarking on the pleasant aspect of her little cabinet, and the advantage she had over M. Pelet in possessing a garden.

'Yes,' she said, 'she often thought so;' and added, 'it is my garden, Monsieur, which makes me retain this house, otherwise I should probably have removed to larger and more commodious premises long since; but you see I could not take my garden with me, and I should scarcely find one so large and pleasant anywhere else in town.'

I approved her judgment.

'But you have not seen it yet,' said she, rising; 'come to the window and take a better view.' I followed her; she opened the sash, and leaning out I saw in full the enclosed demesne which had hitherto been to me an unknown region. It was a long, not very broad strip of cultured ground, with an alley bordered by enormous old fruit-trees down the middle; there was a sort of lawn, a parterre of rose-trees, some flower-borders, and, on the far side, a thickly-planted copse of lilacs, laburnums, and acacias. It looked pleasant, to me—very pleasant, so long a time had elapsed since I had seen a garden of any sort. But it was not only on Mdlle. Reuter's garden that my eyes dwelt; when I had taken a view of her well-trimmed beds and budding shrubberies, I allowed my glance to come back to herself, nor did I hastily withdraw it.

I had thought to see a tall, meagre, yellow, conventual image in black, with a close white cap, bandaged under the chin like a nun's head-gear; whereas, there stood by me a little and roundly formed woman, who might indeed be older than I, but was still young; she could not, I thought, be more than six or seven and twenty; she was as fair as a fair Englishwoman; she had no cap; her hair was nut-brown, and she wore it in curls; pretty her features were not, nor very soft, nor very regular, but neither were they in any degree plain, and I already saw cause to deem them expressive. What was their predominant cast? Was it sagacity?—sense? Yes, I thought so; but I could scarcely as yet be sure. I discovered, however, that there was a certain serenity of eye, and freshness of complexion, most pleasing to behold. The colour on her cheek was like the bloom on a good apple, which is as sound at the core as it is red on the rind.

Mdlle. Reuter and I entered upon business. She said she was not absolutely certain of the wisdom of the step she was about to take, because I was so young, and parents might possibly object to a professor like me for their daughters. 'But it is often well to act on one's own judgment,' said she, 'and to lead parents, rather than be led by them. The fitness of a professor is not a matter of age; and, from what I have heard, and from what I observe myself, I would much rather trust you than M. Ledru, the music-master, who is a married man of near fifty.'

I remarked that I hoped she would find me worthy of her good opinion; that if I knew myself, I was incapable of betraying any confidence reposed in me. 'Du reste,' said she, 'the surveillance will be strictly attended to.' And then she proceeded to discuss the subject of terms. She was very cautious, quite on her guard; she did not absolutely bargain, but she warily sounded me to find out what my expectations might be; and when she could not get me to name a sum, she reasoned and reasoned with a fluent yet quiet circumlocution of speech, and at last nailed me down to five hundred francs per annum—not too much, but I agreed. Before the negotiation was completed, it began to grow a litle dusk. I did not hasten it, for I liked well enough to sit and hear her talk; I was amused with the sort of business talent she displayed. Edward could not have shown himself more practical, though he might have evinced more coarseness and urgency; and then she had so many reasons, so many explanations; and, after all, she succeeded in proving herself quite disinterested and even liberal. At last she concluded, she could say no more, because, as I acquiesced in all things, there was no further ground for the exercise of her parts of speech. I was obliged to rise. I would rather have sat a little longer: what had I to return to but my small empty room? And my eyes had a pleasure in looking at Mdlle. Reuter, especially now, when the twilight softened her features a little, and, in the doubtful dusk, I could fancy her forehead as open as it was really elevated, her mouth touched with turns of sweetness as well as defined in lines of sense. When I rose to go, I held out my hand, on purpose, though I knew it was contrary to the etiquette of foreign habits; she smiled, and said—'Ah! c'est comme tous les Anglais,' but gave me her hand very kindly.

'It is the privilege of my country, Mademoiselle,' said I; 'and remember, I shall always claim it.'

She laughed a little, quite good-naturedly, and with the sort of tranquillity obvious in all she did—a tranquillity which soothed and suited me singularly, at least I thought so that evening. Brussels seemed a very pleasant place to me when I got out again into the street, and it appeared as if some cheerful, eventful, upward-tending career were even then opening to me, on that selfsame mild, still April night. So impressionable a being is man, or at least such a man as I was in those days.

CHAPTER X

NEXT day the morning hours seemed to pass very slowly at M. Pelet's; I wanted the afternoon to come that I might go again to the neighbouring pensionnat and give my first lesson within its pleasant precincts; for pleasant they appeared to me. At noon the hour of recreation arrived; at one o'clock we had lunch; this got on the time, and at last St. Gudule's deep bell, tolling slowly two, marked the moment for which I had been waiting.

At the foot of the narrow back-stairs that descended from my room, I met M. Pelet.

'Comme vous avez l'air rayonnant!' said he. 'Je ne vous ai jamais vu aussi gai. Que s'est-il donc passé?'

'Apparemment que j'aime les changements,' replied I.

'Ah! je comprends—c'est cela—soyez sage seulement. Vous êtes bien jeune—trop jeune pour le rôle que vous allez jouer; il faut prendre garde—savez-vous?'

'Mais quel danger y a-t-il?'

'Je n'en sais rien—ne vous laissez pas aller à de vives impressions—voilà tout.'

I laughed: a sentiment of exquisite pleasure played over my nerves at the thought that 'vives impressions' were likely to be created; it was the deadness, the sameness of life's daily ongoings that had hitherto been my bane; my blouse-clad élèves in the boys' seminary never stirred in me any 'vives impressions,' except it might be occasionally some of anger. I broke from M. Pelet, and as I strode down the passage he followed me with one of his laughs—a very French, rakish, mocking sound.

Again I stood at the neighbouring door, and soon was re-admitted into the cheerful passage with its clear dove-colour imitation marble walls. I followed the portress, and descending a step, and making a turn, I found myself in a sort of corridor; a side door opened, Mdlle. Reuter's little figure, as graceful as it was plump, appeared. I could now see her dress in full daylight; a neat, simple mousseline-laine gown fitted her compact round shape to perfection—delicate little collar and manchettes of lace, trim Parisian brodequins showed her neck, wrists, and feet, to complete advantage; but how grave was her face as she came suddenly upon me! Solicitude and business were in her eye—on her forehead; she looked almost stern. Her 'Bon jour, Monsieur,' was quite polite, but so orderly, so common-place, it spread directly a cool, damp towel over my 'vives impressions.' The servant turned back when her mistress appeared, and I walked slowly along the corridor, side by side with Mdlle. Reuter.

'Monsieur will give a lesson in the first class to-day,' said she; 'dictation or reading will perhaps be the best thing to begin with, for those are the easiest forms of communicating instruction in a foreign language; and, at the first, a master naturally feels a little unsettled.'

She was quite right, as I had found from experience; it only remained for me to acquiesce. We proceeded now in silence. The corridor terminated in a hall, large, lofty, and square; a glass door on one side showed within a long narrow refectory, with tables, an armoire, and two lamps; it was empty; large glass doors, in front, opened on the play-ground and garden; a broad staircase ascended spirally on the opposite side; the remaining wall showed a pair of great folding-doors, now closed, and admitting, doubtless, to the classes.

Mdlle. Reuter turned her eye laterally on me, to ascertain, probably, whether I was collected enough to be ushered into her sanctum sanctorum. I suppose she judged me to be in a tolerable state of self-government, for she opened the door.

and I followed her through. A rustling sound of uprising greeted our entrance; without looking to the right or left, I walked straight up the lane between two sets of benches and desks, and took possession of the empty chair and isolated desk raised on an estrade, of one step high, so as to command one division; the other division being under the surveillance of a maîtresse similarly elevated. At the back of the estrade, and attached to a movable partition dividing this school-room from another beyond, was a large tableau of wood painted black and varnished; a thick crayon of white chalk lay on my desk for the convenience of elucidating any grammatical or verbal obscurity which might occur in my lessons by writing it upon the tableau; a wet sponge appeared beside the chalk, to enable me to efface the marks when they had served the purpose intended.

I carefully and deliberately made these observations before allowing myself to take one glance at the benches before me; having handled the crayon, looked back at the tableau, fingered the sponge in order to ascertain that it was in a right state of moisture, I found myself cool enough to admit of looking calmly up and gazing deliberately round me.

And first I observed that Mdlle. Reuter had already glided away, she was nowhere visible; a maîtresse or teacher, the one who occupied the corresponding estrade to my own, alone remained to keep guard over me; she was a little in the shade, and, with my short sight, I could only see that she was of a thin bony figure and rather tallowy complexion, and that her attitude, as she sat, partook equally of listlessness and affectation. More obvious, more prominent, shone on by the full light of the large window, were the occupants of the benches just before me, of whom some were girls of fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, some young women from eighteen (as it appeared to me) up to twenty; the most modest attire, the simplest fashion of wearing the hair, were apparent in all; and good features, ruddy, blooming complexions, large and brilliant eyes, forms full, even to solidity, seemed to abound. I did not bear the first view like a stoic; I was dazzled, my eyes fell, and in a voice somewhat too low I murmured—'Prenez vos cahiers de dictée, Mesdemoiselles.'

Not so had I bid the boys at Pelet's take their reading-books. A rustle followed, and an opening of desks; behind the lifted lids which momentarily screened the heads bent down to search for exercise-books, I heard tittering and whispers.

'Eulalie, je suis prête à pâmer de rire,' observed one.

'Comme il a rougi en parlant!'

'Oui, c'est un véritable blanc-bec.'

'Tais-toi, Hortense—il nous écoute.'

And now the lids sank and the heads reappeared; I had marked three, the whisperers, and I did not scruple to take a very steady look at them as they emerged from their temporary eclipse. It is astonishing what ease and courage their little phrases of flippancy had given me; the idea by which I had been awed was that the youthful beings before me, with their dark nun-like robes and softly-braided hair, were a kind of half-angels. The light titter, the giddy whisper, had already in some measure relieved my mind of that fond and oppressive fancy.

The three I allude to were just in front, within half a yard of my estrade, and were among the most womanly-looking present. Their names I knew afterwards, and may as well mention now; they were Eulalie, Hortense, Caroline. Eulalie was tall, and very finely shaped: she was fair, and her features were those of a Low Country Madonna; many a 'figure de Vierge' have I seen in Dutch pictures exactly resembling hers; there were no angles in her shape or in her face, all was curve and roundness—neither thought, sentiment, nor passion disturbed by line or flush the equality of her pale, clear skin; her noble bust heaved with her regular breathing, her eyes moved a little—by these evidences of life alone could I have distinguished her from some large handsome figure moulded in wax. Hortense was of middle size and stout, her form was ungraceful, her face striking, more alive and brilliant than Eulalie's, her hair was dark brown, her complexion richly coloured; there were frolic and mischief in her eye: consistency and good sense she might possess, but none of her features betokened those qualities.

Caroline was little, though evidently full grown; raven-black hair, very dark eyes, absolutely-regular features, with a colourless olive complexion, clear as to the face and sallow about the neck, formed in her that assemblage of points whose union many persons regard as the perfection of beauty. How, with the tintless pallor of her skin and the classic straightness of her lineaments, she managed to look sensual, I don't know. I think her lips and eyes contrived the affair between them, and the result left no uncertainty on the beholder's mind. She was sensual now, and in ten years' time she would be coarse—promise plain was written in her face of much future folly.

If I looked at these girls with little scruple, they looked at me with still less. Eulalie raised her unmoved eye to mine, and seemed to expect, passively but securely, an impromptu tribute to her majestic charms. Hortense regarded me boldly, and giggled at the same time, while she said, with an air of impudent freedom—'Dictez-nous quelquechose de facile pour commencer, Monsieur.'

Caroline shook her loose ringlets of abundant but somewhat coarse hair over her rolling black eyes; parting her lips, as full as those of a hot-blooded Maroon, she showed her well-set teeth sparkling between them, and treated me at the same time to a smile 'de sa façon.' Beautiful as Pauline Borghese, she looked at the moment scarcely purer than Lucrèce de Borgia. Caroline was of noble family. I heard her lady-mother's character afterwards, and then I ceased to wonder at the precocious accomplishments of the daughter. These three, I at once saw, deemed themselves the queens of the school, and conceived that by their splendour they threw all the rest into the shade. In less than five minutes they had thus revealed to me their characters, and in less than five minutes I had buckled on a breast-plate of steelly indifference, and let down a visor of impassible austerity.

'Take your pens and commence writing,' said I, in as dry and trite a voice as if I had been addressing only Jules Vanderkelkov and Co.

The dictée now commenced. My three belles interrupted me perpetually with little silly questions and uncalled-for remarks, to some of which I made no answer, and to others replied very quietly and briefly.

'Comment dit-on point et virgule en Anglais, Monsieur?'

'Semi-colon, Mademoiselle.'

'Semi-collong? Ah, comme c'est drôle!' (giggle).

'J'ai une si mauvaise plume—impossible d'écrire!'

'Mais, Monsieur—je ne sais pas suivre—vous allez si vite.'

'Je n'ai rien compris, moi!'

Here a general murmur arose, and the teacher, opening her lips for the first time, ejaculated—'Silence, Mesdemoiselles!'

No silence followed—on the contrary, the three ladies in front began to talk more loudly.

'C'est si difficile, l'Anglais!'

'Je déteste la dictée.'

'Quel ennui d'écrire quelquechose que l'on ne comprend pas!'

Some of those behind laughed: a degree of confusion began to pervade the class; it was necessary to take prompt measures.

'Donnez-moi votre cahier,' said I to Eulalie in an abrupt tone; and bending over, I took it before she had time to give it.

'Et vous, Mademoiselle—donnez-moi le vôtre,' continued I, more mildly, addressing a little pale, plain-looking girl who sat in the first row of the other division, and whom I had remarked as being at once the ugliest and the most attentive in the room; she rose up, walked over to me, and delivered her book with a grave, modest curtsey. I glanced over the two dictations; Eulalie's was slurred, blotted, and full of silly mistakes—Sylvie's (such was the name of the ugly little girl) was clearly written; it contained no error against sense, and but few faults of orthography. I coolly read aloud both exercises, marking the faults—then I looked at Eulalie:

'C'est honteux!' said I, and I deliberately tore her dictation in four parts, and presented her with the fragments. I returned Sylvie her book with a smile, saying—'C'est bien—je suis content de vous.'

Sylvie looked calmly pleased, Eulalie swelled like an incensed turkey, but the mutiny was quelled: the conceited coquetry and futile flirtation of the first bench were exchanged for a taciturn sullenness, much more convenient to me, and the rest of my lesson passed without interruption.

A bell clanging out in the yard announced the moment for the cessation of school labours. I heard our own bell at the same time, and that of a certain public college immediately after. Order dissolved instantly; up started every pupil; I hastened to seize my hat, bow to the maîtresse, and quit the room before the tide of externats should pour from the inner class, where I knew near a hundred were prisoned, and whose rising tumult I already heard.

I had scarcely crossed the hall and gained the corridor, when Mdlle. Reuter came again upon me.

'Step in here a moment,' said she, and she held open the door of the side room from whence she had issued on my arrival; it was a *salle à manger*, as appeared from the buffet and the armoire vitrée, filled with glass and china, which formed part of its furniture. Ere she had closed the door on me and herself, the corridor was already filled with day-pupils, tearing down their cloaks, bonnets, and cabas from the wooden pegs on which they were suspended; the shrill voice of a maîtresse was heard at intervals vainly endeavouring to enforce some sort of order; vainly, I say: discipline there was none in these rough ranks, and yet this was considered one of the best-conducted schools in Brussels.

'Well, you have given your first lesson,' began Mdlle. Reuter in the most calm, equable voice, as though quite unconscious of the chaos from which we were separated only by a single wall.

'Were you satisfied with your pupils, or did any circumstance in their conduct give you cause for complaint? Conceal nothing from me, repose in me entire confidence.'

Happily, I felt in myself complete power to manage my pupils without aid; the enchantment, the golden haze which had dazzled my perspicuity at first, had been a good deal dissipated. I cannot say I was chagrined or downcast by the contrast which the reality of a pensionnat de demoiselles presented to my vague ideal of the same community; I was only enlightened and amused; consequently, I felt in no disposition to complain to Mdlle. Reuter, and I received her considerate invitation to confidence with a smile.

'A thousand thanks, Mademoiselle, all has gone very smoothly.'

She looked more than doubtful.

'Et les trois demoiselles du premier banc?' said she.

'Ah! tout va au mieux!' was my answer, and Mdlle. Reuter ceased to question me; but her eye—not large, not brilliant, not melting, or kindling, but astute, penetrating, practical, showed she was even with me; it let out a momentary gleam, which said plainly, 'Be as close as you like, I am not dependent on your candour; what you would conceal I already know.'

By a transition so quiet as to be scarcely perceptible, the directress's manner changed; the anxious business air passed from her face, and she began chatting about the weather and the town, and asking in neighbourly wise after M. and Madame Pelet. I answered all her little questions; she prolonged her talk, I went on following its many little windings; she sat so long, said so much, varied so often the topics of discourse, that it was not difficult to perceive she had a particular aim in thus detaining me. Her mere words could have afforded no clue to this aim, but her countenance aided; while her lips uttered only affable commonplaces, her eyes reverted continually to my face. Her glances were not given in full, but out of the corners, so quietly, so stealthily, yet I think I lost not one. I watched her as keenly as she watched me; I perceived soon that she was feeling after my real character; she was searching for salient points, and weak points, and eccentric points; she was applying now this test, now that, hoping in the end to find some chink, some niche, where she could put in her little firm foot and stand upon my neck—mistress of my nature. Do not mistake me, reader, it was no amorous influence she wished to gain—at that time it was only the power of the politician to which she aspired; I was now installed as a professor in her establishment, and she wanted to know where her mind was superior to mine—by what feeling or opinion she could lead me.

I enjoyed the game much, and did not hasten its conclusion; sometimes I gave her hopes, beginning a sentence rather weakly, when her shrewd eye would light up—she thought she had me; having led her a little way, I delighted to turn round and finish with sound, hard sense, whereat her countenance would fall. At last a servant entered to announce dinner; the conflict being thus necessarily terminated, we parted without having gained any advantage on either side: Mdlle. Reuter had not even given me an opportunity of attacking her with feeling, and I had managed to baffle her little schemes of craft. It was a regular drawn battle. I again held out my hand when I left the room, she gave me hers; it was a small and white hand, but how cool! I met her eye too in full—obliging her to give me a straightforward look; this last test went against me: it left her as it found her—moderate, temperate, tranquil; me it disappointed.

'I am growing wiser,' thought I, as I walked back to M. Pelet's. 'Look at this little woman; is she like the women of novelists and romancers? To read of female character as depicted in Poetry and Fiction, one would think it was made up of sentiment, either for good or bad—here is a specimen, and a most sensible and respectable specimen, too, whose staple ingredient is abstract reason. No Talleyrand was ever more passionless than Zoraïde Reuter!' So I thought then; I found afterwards that blunt susceptibilities are very consistent with strong propensities.

CHAPTER XI

I HAD indeed had a very long talk with the crafty little politician, and on regaining my quarters, I found that dinner was half over. To be late at meals was against a standing rule of the establishment, and had it been one of the Flemish ushers who thus entered after the removal of the soup and the commencement of the first course, M. Pelet would probably have greeted him with a public rebuke, and would certainly have mulcted him both of soup and fish; as it was, that polite though partial gentleman only shook his head, and as I took my place, unrolled my napkin, and said my heretical grace to myself, he civilly despatched a servant to the kitchen, to bring me a plate of 'purée aux carottes' (for this was a maigre-day), and before sending away the first course, reserved for me a portion of the stock-fish of which it consisted. Dinner being over, the boys rushed out for their evening play; Kint and Vandam (the two ushers) of course followed them. Poor fellows! if they had not looked so very heavy, so very soulless, so very indifferent to all things in heaven above or in the earth beneath, I could have pitied them greatly for the obligation they were under to trail after those rough lads everywhere and at all times; even as it was, I felt disposed to scout myself as a privileged prig when I turned to ascend to my chamber, sure to find there, if not enjoyment, at least liberty; but this evening (as had often happened before) I was to be still further distinguished.

'Eh bien, mauvais sujet!' said the voice of M. Pelet behind me, as I set my foot on the first step of the stair, 'où allez-vous? Venez à la salle à manger, que je vous gronde un peu.'

'I beg pardon, Monsieur,' said I, as I followed him to his private sitting-room, 'for having returned so late—it was not my fault.'

'That is just what I want to know,' rejoined M. Pelet, as he ushered me into the comfortable parlour with a good wood-fire—for the stove had now been removed for the season. Having rung the bell, he ordered 'Coffee for two,' and presently he and I were seated, almost in English comfort, one on each side of the hearth, a little round table between us, with a coffee-pot, a sugar-basin, and two large white china cups. While M. Pelet employed himself in choosing a cigar from a box, my thoughts reverted to the two outcast ushers, whose voices I could hear even now crying hoarsely for order in the playground.

'C'est une grande responsabilité que la surveillance,' observed I.

'Plaît-il?' said M. Pelet.

I remarked that I thought Messieurs Vandam and Kint must sometimes be a little fatigued with their labours.

'Des bêtes de somme,—des bêtes de somme,' murmured scornfully the director. Meantime I offered him his cup of coffee.

'Servez-vous, mon garçon,' said he blandly, when I had put a couple of huge lumps of continental sugar into his cup. 'And now tell me why you stayed so long at Mdlle. Reuter's. I know that lessons conclude, in her establishment as in mine, at four o'clock, and when you returned it was past five.'

'Mademoiselle wished to speak with me, Monsieur.'

'Indeed! on what subject, if one may ask?'

'Mademoiselle talked about nothing, Monsieur.'

'A fertile topic! And did she discourse thereon in the schoolroom, before the pupils?'

'No; like you, Monsieur, she asked me to walk into her parlour.'

'And Madame Reuter—the old duenna—my mother's gossip, was there, of course?'

'No, Monsieur; I had the honour of being quite alone with Mademoiselle.'

'C'est joli—cela,' observed M. Pelet, and he smiled and looked into the fire.

'Honi soit qui mal y pense,' murmured I, significantly.

'Je connais un peu ma petite voisine, voyez-vous.'

'In that case, Monsieur will be able to aid me in finding out what was Mademoiselle's reason for making me sit before her sofa one mortal hour, listening to the most copious and fluent dissertation on the merest frivolities.'

'She was sounding your character.'

'I thought so, Monsieur.'

'Did she find out your weak point?'

'What is my weak point?'

'Why, the sentimental. Any woman sinking her shaft deep enough, will at last reach a fathomless spring of sensibility in thy breast, Crimsworth.'

I felt the blood stir about my heart and rise warm to my cheek.

'Some women might, Monsieur.'

'Is Mdlle. Reuter of the number? Come, speak frankly, mon fils; elle est encore jeune, plus âgée que toi peut-être, mais juste assez pour unir la tendresse d'une petite maman à l'amour d'une épouse dévouée; n'est-ce pas que cela t'irait supérieurement?'

'No, Monsieur; I should like my wife to be my wife, and not half my mother.'

'She is then a little too old for you?'

'No, Monsieur, not a day too old if she suited me in other things.'

'In what does she not suit you, William? She is personally agreeable, is she not?'

'Very; her hair and complexion are just what I admire; and her turn of form, though quite Belgian, is full of grace.'

'Bravo! and her face? her features? How do you like them?'

'A little harsh, especially her mouth.'

'Ah, yes! her mouth,' said M. Pelet, and he chuckled inwardly. 'There is character about her mouth—firmness—but she has a very pleasant smile; don't you think so?'

'Rather crafty.'

'True, but that expression of craft is owing to her eyebrows; have you remarked her eyebrows?'

I answered that I had not.

'You have not seen her looking down then?' said he.

'No.'

'It is a treat, notwithstanding. Observe her when she has some knitting, or some other woman's work in hand, and sits the image of peace, calmly intent on her needles and her silk, some discussion meantime going on around her, in the course of which peculiarities of character are being developed, or important interests canvassed; she takes no part in it; her humble, feminine mind is wholly with her knitting; none of her features move; she neither presumes to smile approval, nor frown disapprobation; her little hands assiduously ply their unpretending task; if she can only get this purse finished, or this bonnet-grec completed, it is enough for her. If gentlemen approach her chair, a deeper quiescence, a meeker modesty settles on her features, and clothes her general mien; observe then her eyebrows, et dites-moi s'il n'y a pas du chat dans l'un et du renard dans l'autre.'

'I will take careful notice the first opportunity,' said I.

'And then,' continued M. Pelet, 'the eyelid will flicker, the light-coloured lashes be lifted a second, and a blue eye, glancing out from under the screen, will take its brief, sly, searching survey, and retreat again.'

I smiled, and so did Pelet, and after a few minutes' silence, I asked:—'Will she ever marry, do you think?'

'Marry! Will birds pair? Of course it is both her intention and resolution to marry when she finds a suitable match, and no one is better aware than herself of the sort of impression she is capable of producing; no one likes better to captivate in a quiet way. I am mistaken if she will not yet leave the print of her stealing steps on thy heart, Crimsworth.'

'Of her steps? Confound it, no! My heart is not a plank to be walked on.'

'But the soft touch of a patte de velours will do it no harm.'

'She offers me no patte de velours; she is all form and reserve with me.'

'That to begin with: let respect be the foundation, affection the first floor, love the superstructure; Mdlle. Reuter is a skilful architect.'

'And interest, M. Pelet—interest? Will not Mademoiselle consider that point?'

'Yes, yes, no doubt; it will be the cement between every stone. And now we have discussed the directress, what of the pupils? N'y-a-t-il pas de belles études parmi ces jeunes têtes?'

'Studies of character? Yes; curious ones, at least, I imagine; but one cannot divine much from a first interview.'

'Ah, you affect discretion; but tell me now, were you not a little abashed before those blooming young creatures?'

'At first, yes; but I rallied and got through with all due sang-froid.'

'I don't believe you.

'It is true, notwithstanding. At first I thought them angels, but they did not leave me long under that delusion; three of the eldest and handsomest undertook the task of setting me right, and they managed so cleverly that in five minutes I knew *them*, at least, for what they were—three arrant coquettes.'

'Je les connais!' exclaimed M. Pelet. 'Elles sont toujours au premier rang à l'église et à la promenade; une blonde superbe, une jolie espiègle, une belle brune.'

'Exactly.'

'Lovely creatures all of them—heads for artists; what a group they would make, taken together! Eulalie (I know their names), with her smooth braided hair and calm ivory brow. Hortense, with her rich chestnut locks so luxuriantly knotted, plaited, twisted, as if she did not know how to dispose of all their abundance, with her vermilion lips, damask cheek, and roguish laughing eye. And Caroline de Blémont! Ah, there is beauty! beauty in perfection. What a cloud of sable curls about the face of a houri! What fascinating lips! What glorious black eyes! Your Byron would have worshipped her, and you—you cold, frigid islander!—you played the austere, the insensible in the presence of an Aphrodite so exquisite?'

I might have laughed at the director's enthusiasm had I believed it real, but there was something in his tone which indicated got-up raptures. I felt he was only affecting fervour in order to put me off my guard, to induce me to come out in return, so I scarcely even smiled. He went on:—'Confess, William, do not the mere good looks of Zoraïde Reuter appear dowdyish and commonplace compared with the splendid charms of some of her pupils?'

The question discomposed me, but I now felt plainly that my principal was endeavouring (for reasons best known to himself—at that time I could not fathom them) to excite ideas and wishes in my mind alien to what was right and honourable. The iniquity of the instigation proved its antidote, and when he further added: 'Each of those three beautiful girls will have a handsome fortune; and with a little address, a gentlemanlike, intelligent young fellow like you might make himself master of the hand, heart, and purse of any one of the trio.'

I replied by a look and an interrogative 'Monsieur?' which startled him.

He laughed a forced laugh, affirmed that he had only been joking, and demanded whether I could possibly have thought him in earnest. Just then the bell rang; the play-hour was over; it was an evening on which M. Pelet was accustomed to read passages from the drama and the belles lettres to his pupils. He did not wait for my answer, but rising, left the room, humming as he went some gay strain of Béranger's.

CHAPTER XII

Daily, as I continued my attendance at the seminary of Mdlle. Reuter, did I find fresh occasions to compare the ideal with the real. What had I known of female character previously to my arrival at Brussels? Precious little. And what was my notion of it? Something vague, slight, gauzy, glittering; now when I came in contact with it I found it to be a palpable substance enough; very hard too sometimes, and often heavy; there was metal in it, both lead and iron.

Let the idealists, the dreamers about earthly angels and human flowers, just look here while I open my portfolio and show them a sketch or two, pencilled after nature. I took these sketches in the second-class schoolroom of Mdlle. Reuter's establishment, where about a hundred specimens of the genus 'jeune fille' collected together, offered a fertile variety of subject. A miscellaneous assortment they were, differing both in caste and country; as I sat on my estrade and glanced over the long range of desks, I had under my eye French, English, Belgians, Austrians, and Prussians. The majority belonged to the class bourgeois: but there were many countesses, there were the daughters of two generals and of several colonels, captains, and government employés; these ladies sat side by side with young females destined to be demoiselles de magasins, and with some Flamandes, genuine aborigines of the country. In dress all were nearly similar, and in manners there was small difference; exceptions there were to the general rule, but the majority gave the tone to the establishment, and that tone was rough, boisterous, marked by a point-blank disregard of all forbearance towards each other or their teachers; an eager pursuit by each individual of her own interest and convenience; and a coarse indifference to the interest and convenience of every one else. Most of them could lie with audacity when it appeared advantageous to do so. All understood the art of speaking fair when a point was to be gained, and could with consummate skill and at a moment's notice turn the cold shoulder the instant civility ceased to be profitable. Very little open quarrelling ever took place amongst them; but backbiting and talebearing were universal. Close friendships were forbidden by the rules of the school, and no one girl seemed to cultivate more regard for another than was just necessary to secure a companion when solitude would have been irksome. They were each and all supposed to have been reared in utter unconsciousness of vice. The precautions used to keep them ignorant, if not innocent, were innumerable. How was it, then, that scarcely one of those girls having attained the age of fourteen could look a man in the face with modesty and propriety? An air of bold, impudent flirtation, or a loose, silly leer, was sure to answer the most ordinary glance from a masculine eye. I know nothing of the arcana of the Roman Catholic religion, and I am not a bigot in matters of theology, but I suspect the root of this precocious impurity, so obvious, so general in Popish countries, is to be found in the discipline, if not the doctrines of the Church of Rome. I record what I have seen: these girls belonged to what are called the respectable ranks of society; they had all been carefully brought up, yet was the mass of them mentally depraved. So much for the general view: now for one or two selected specimens.

The first picture is a full length of Aurelia Koslow, a German Fräulein, or rather a half-breed between German and Russian. She is eighteen years of age, and has been sent to Brussels to finish her education; she is of middle size, stiffly made, body long, legs short, bust much developed but not compactly moulded, waist disproportionately compressed by an inhumanly braced corset, dress carefully arranged, large feet tortured into small bottines, head small, hair smoothed, braided, oiled, and gummed to perfection; very low forehead, very diminutive and vindictive grey eyes, somewhat Tartar features, rather flat nose, rather high cheekbones, yet the ensemble not positively ugly; tolerably good complexion. So much for person. As to mind, deplorably ignorant and ill-informed; incapable of writing or speaking correctly even German, her native tongue, a dunce in French, and her attempts at learning English a mere farce; yet she has been at school twelve years; but as she invariably gets her exercises, of every description, done by a fellow-pupil, and reads her lessons off a book concealed in her lap, it is not wonderful that her progress has been so snail-like. I do not know what Aurelia's daily habits of life are, because I have not the opportunity of observing her at all times; but from what I see of the state of her desk, books, and papers, I should say she is slovenly and even dirty; her outward dress, as I have said, is well attended to, but in passing behind her bench, I have remarked that her neck is grey for want of washing, and her hair, so glossy with gum and grease, is not such as one feels tempted to pass the hand over, much less to run the fingers through. Aurelia's conduct in class, at least when I am present, is something extraordinary, considered as an index of girlish innocence. The moment I enter the room, she nudges her next neighbour and indulges in a half-suppressed laugh. As I take my seat on the estrade, she fixes her eye on me; she seems resolved to attract, and, if possible, monopolise my notice: to this end she launches at me all sorts of looks, languishing, provoking, leering, laughing. As I am found quite proof against this sort of artillery—for we scorn, what, unasked, is lavishly offered—she has recourse to the expedient of making noises; sometimes she sighs, sometimes groans, sometimes utters inarticulate sounds, for which language has no name. If, in walking up the schoolroom, I pass near her, she puts out her foot that it may touch mine; if I do not happen to observe the manœuvre, and my boot comes in contact with her brodequin, she affects to fall into convulsions of suppressed laughter; if I notice the snare and avoid it, she expresses her mortification in sullen muttering, where I hear myself abused in bad French, pronounced with an intolerable Low German accent.

Not far from Mdlle. Koslow sits another young lady, by name Adèle Dronsart: this is a Belgian, rather low of stature, in form heavy, with broad waist, short neck and limbs, good red and white complexion, features well chiselled and regular, well-cut eyes of a clear brown colour, light brown hair, good teeth, age not much above fifteen, but as full-grown as a stout young Englishwoman of twenty. This portrait gives the idea of a somewhat dumpy but good-looking damsel, does it not? Well, when I looked along the row of young heads, my eye generally stopped at this of Adèle's; her gaze was ever waiting for mine, and it frequently succeeded in arresting it. She was an unnatural-looking being—so young, fresh, blooming, yet so Gorgon-like. Suspicion, sullen ill-temper were on her forehead, vicious propensities in her eye, envy and panther-like deceit about her mouth. In general she sat very still; her massive shape looked as if it could not bend much, nor did her large head—so broad at the base, so narrow towards the top—seem made to turn readily on her short neck. She had but two varieties of expression; the prevalent one a forbidding, dissatisfied scowl, varied sometimes by a most pernicious and perfidious smile. She was shunned by her fellow-pupils, for, bad as many of them were, few were as bad as she.

Aurelia and Adèle were in the first division of the second class; the second division was headed by a pensionnaire named Juanna Trista. This girl was of mixed Belgian and Spanish origin; her Flemish mother was dead, her Catalonian father was a merchant residing in the —— Isles, where Juanna had been born and whence she was sent to Europe to be educated. I wonder that any one, looking at that girl's head and countenance, would have received her under their roof. She had precisely the same shape of skull as Pope Alexander the Sixth: her organs of benevolence, veneration, conscientiousness, adhesiveness, were singularly small, those of self-esteem, firmness, destructiveness, combativeness, preposterously large; her head sloped up in the penthouse shape, was contracted about the forehead, and prominent behind; she had rather good, though large and marked features; her temperament was fibrous and bilious, her complexion pale and dark, hair and eyes black, form angular and rigid but proportionate, age fifteen.

Juanna was not very thin, but she had a gaunt visage, and her 'regard' was fierce and hungry; narrow as was her brow, it presented space enough for the legible graving of two words, Mutiny and Hate; in some one of her other lineaments—I think the eye—cowardice had also its distinct cipher. Mdlle. Trista thought fit to trouble my first lessons with a coarse work-day sort of turbulence; she made noises with her mouth like a horse, she ejected her saliva, she uttered brutal expressions; behind and below her were seated a band of very vulgar, inferior-looking Flamandes, including two or three examples of that deformity of person and imbecility of intellect whose frequency in the Low Countries would seem to furnish proof that the climate is such as to induce degeneracy of the human mind and body; these, I soon found, were completely under her influence, and with their aid she got up and sustained a swinish tumult, which I was constrained at last to quell by ordering her and two of her tools to rise from their seats, and, having kept them standing five minutes, turning them bodily out of the schoolroom: the accomplices into a large place adjoining called the grande salle; the principal into a cabinet, of which I closed the door and pocketed the key. This judgment I executed in the presence of Mdlle. Reuter, who looked much aghast at beholding so decided a proceeding—the most severe that had ever been ventured on in her establishment. Her look of affright I answered with one of composure, and finally with a smile, which perhaps flattered, and certainly soothed her. Juanna Trista remained in Europe long enough to repay, by malevolence and ingratitude, all who had ever done her a good turn; and she then went to join her father in the —— Isles, exulting in the thought that she should there have slaves, whom, as she said, she could kick and strike at will.

These three pictures are from the life. I possess others, as marked and as little agreeable, but I will spare my reader the exhibition of them.

Doubtless it will be thought that I ought now, by way of contrast, to show something charming; some gentle virgin head, circled with a halo, some sweet personification of innocence, clasping the dove of peace to her bosom. No: I saw nothing of the sort, and therefore cannot portray it. The pupil in the school possessing the happiest disposition was a young girl from the country, Louise Path; she was sufficiently benevolent and obliging, but not well taught nor well mannered; moreover, the plague-spot of dissimulation was in her also; honour and principle were unknown to her, she had scarcely heard their names. The least exceptionable pupil was the poor little Sylvie I have mentioned once before. Sylvie was gentle in manners, intelligent in mind; she was even sincere, as far as her religion would permit her to be so, but her physical organisation was defective; weak health stunted her growth and chilled her spirits, and then, destined as she was for the cloister, her whole soul was warped to a conventual bias, and in the tame, trained subjection of her manner, one read that she had already prepared herself for her future course of life; by giving up her independence of thought and action into the hands of some despotic confessor. She permitted herself no original opinion, no preference of companion or employment; in everything she was guided by another. With a pale, passive, automaton air, she went about all day long doing what she was bid; never what she liked, or what, from innate conviction, she thought it right to do. The poor little future religieuse had been early taught to make the dictates of her own reason and conscience quite subordinate to the will of her spiritual director. She was the model pupil of Mdlle. Reuter's establishment; pale, blighted image, where life lingered feebly, but whence the soul had been conjured by Romish wizardcraft!

A few English pupils there were in this school, and these might be divided into two classes. 1st. The continental English—the daughters chiefly of broken adventurers whom debt or dishonour had driven from their own country. These poor girls had never known the advantages of settled homes, decorous example, or honest Protestant education; resident a few months now in one Catholic school, now in another, as their parents wandered from land to land—from France to Germany, from Germany to Belgium—they had picked up some scanty instruction, many bad habits, losing every notion even of the first elements of religion and morals, and acquiring an imbecile indifference to every sentiment that can elevate humanity; they were distinguishable by an habitual look of sullen dejection, the result of crushed self-respect and constant browbeating from their Popish fellow-pupils, who hated them as English, and scorned them as heretics.

The second class were British English. Of these I did not encounter half-a-dozen during the whole time of my attendance at the seminary; their characteristics were clean but careless dress, ill-arranged hair (compared with the tight and trim foreigners), erect carriage, flexible figures, white and taper hands, features more irregular, but also more intellectual than those of the Belgians, grave and modest countenances, a general air of native propriety and decency; by this last circumstance alone I could at a glance distinguish the daughter of Albion and nursling of Protestantism from the foster-child of Rome, the *protégée* of Jesuitry: proud, too, was the aspect of these British girls; at once envied and ridiculed by their continental associates, they warded off insult with austere civility, and met hate with mute disdain; they eschewed company-keeping, and in the midst of numbers seemed to dwell isolated.

The teachers presiding over this mixed multitude were three in number, all French—their names Mdlles. Zéphyrine, Pélagie, and Suzette; the two last were commonplace personages enough; their look was ordinary, their manner was ordinary, their temper was ordinary, their thoughts, feelings, and views were all ordinary—were I to write a chapter on the subject I could not elucidate it further. Zéphyrine was somewhat more distinguished in appearance and deportment than Pélagie and Suzette, but in character a genuine Parisian coquette, perfidious, mercenary, and dry-hearted. A fourth maîtresse I sometimes saw who seemed to come daily to teach needlework, or netting, or lace-mending, or some such flimsy art; but of her I never had more than a passing glimpse, as she sat in the carré, with her frames and some dozen of the elder pupils about her; consequently I had no opportunity of studying her character, or even of observing her person much; the latter, I remarked, had a very girlish air for a maîtresse, otherwise it was not striking; of character I should think she possessed but little, as her pupils seemed constantly 'en révolte' against her authority. She did not reside in the house; her name, I think, was Mdlle. Henri.

Amidst this assemblage of all that was insignificant and defective, much that was vicious and repulsive (by that last epithet many would have described the two or three stiff, silent, decently behaved, ill-dressed British girls), the sensible, sagacious, affable directress shone like a steady star over a marsh full of Jack-o'-lanthorns; profoundly aware of her superiority, she derived an inward bliss from that consciousness which sustained her under all the care and responsibility inseparable from her position; it kept her temper calm, her brow smooth, her manner tranquil. She liked—as who would not?—on entering the schoolroom, to feel that her sole presence sufficed to diffuse that order and quiet which all the remonstrances, and even commands, of her underlings frequently failed to enforce; she liked to stand in comparison, or rather contrast, with those who surrounded her, and to know that in personal as well as mental advantages, she bore away the undisputed palm of preference—(the three teachers were all plain). Her pupils she managed with such indulgence and address, taking always on herself the office of recompenser and eulogist, and abandoning to her subalterns every invidious task of blame and punishment, that they all regarded her with deference, if not with affection; her teachers did not love her, but they submitted because they were her inferiors in everything; the various masters who attended her school were each and all in some way or other under her influence: over one she had acquired power by her skilful management of his bad temper; over another by little attentions to his petty caprices; a third she had subdued by flattery; a fourth—a timid man—she kept in awe by a sort of austere decision of mien; me, she still watched, still tried by the most ingenious tests—she roved round me, baffled, yet persevering; I believe she thought I was like a smooth and bare precipice, which offered neither jutting stone nor tree-root, nor tuft of grass to aid the climber. Now she flattered with exquisite tact, now she moralised, now she tried how far I was accessible to mercenary motives, then she disported on the brink of affection—knowing that some men are won by weakness—anon, she talked excellent sense, aware that others have the folly to admire judgment. I found it at once pleasant and easy to evade all these efforts; it was sweet, when she thought me nearly won, to turn round and to smile in her very eyes, half scornfully, and then to witness her scarcely veiled, though mute mortification. Still she persevered, and at last, I am bound to confess it, her finger, essaying, proving every atom of the casket, touched its secret spring, and for a moment the lid sprung open; she laid her hand on the jewel within; whether she stole and broke it, or whether the lid shut again with a snap on her fingers, read on, and you shall know.

It happened that I came one day to give a lesson when I was indisposed; I had a bad cold and a cough; two hours' incessant talking left me very hoarse and tired; as I quitted the schoolroom, and was passing along the corridor, I met Mdlle. Reuter; she remarked, with an anxious air, that I looked very pale and tired. 'Yes,' I said, 'I was fatigued;'

and then, with increased interest, she rejoined, 'You shall not go away till you have had some refreshment.' She persuaded me to step into the parlour, and was very kind and gentle while I stayed. The next day she was kinder still; she came herself into the class to see that the windows were closed, and that there was no draught; she exhorted me with friendly earnestness not to over-exert myself; when I went away, she gave me her hand unasked, and I could not but mark, by a respectful and gentle pressure, that I was sensible of the favour, and grateful for it. My modest demonstration kindled a little merry smile on her countenance; I thought her almost charming. During the remainder of the evening, my mind was full of impatience for the afternoon of the next day to arrive, that I might see her again.

I was not disappointed, for she sat in the class during the whole of my subsequent lesson, and often looked at me almost with affection. At four o'clock she accompanied me out of the schoolroom, asking with solicitude after my health, then scolding me sweetly because I spoke too loud and gave myself too much trouble; I stopped at the glass-door which led into the garden, to hear her lecture to the end; the door was open, it was a very fine day, and while I listened to the soothing reprimand, I looked at the sunshine and flowers, and felt very happy. The day-scholars began to pour from the schoolrooms into the passage.

'Will you go into the garden a minute or two,' asked she, 'till they are gone?'

I descended the steps without answering, but I looked back as much as to say—'You will come with me?'

In another minute I and the directress were walking side by side down the alley bordered with fruit-trees, whose white blossoms were then in full blow as well as their tender green leaves. The sky was blue, the air still, the May afternoon was full of brightness and fragrance. Released from the stifling class, surrounded with flowers and foliage, with a pleasing, smiling, affable woman at my side—how did I feel? Why, very enviably. It seemed as if the romantic visions my imagination had suggested of this garden, while it was yet hidden from me by the jealous boards, were more than realised; and, when a turn in the alley shut out the view of the house, and some tall shrubs excluded M. Pelet's mansion, and screened us momentarily from the other houses, rising amphitheatre-like round this green spot, I gave my arm to Mdlle. Reuter, and led her to a garden-chair, nestled under some lilacs near. She sat down; I took my place at her side. She went on talking to me with that ease which communicates ease, and, as I listened, a revelation dawned in my mind that I was on the brink of falling in love. The dinner-bell rang, both at her house and M. Pelet's; we were obliged to part; I detained her a moment as she was moving away.

'I want something,' said I.

'What?' asked Zoraïde, naïvely.

'Only a flower.'

'Gather it then—or two, or twenty, if you like.'

'No—one will do—but you must gather it, and give it to me.'

'What a caprice!' she exclaimed, but she raised herself on her tip-toes, and, plucking a beautiful branch of lilac, offered it to me with grace. I took it, and went away, satisfied for the present, and hopeful for the future.

Certainly that May day was a lovely one, and it closed in moonlight night of summer warmth and serenity. I remember this well; for, having sat up late that evening, correcting devoirs, and feeling weary and a little oppressed with the closeness of my small room, I opened the often-mentioned boarded window, whose boards, however, I had persuaded old Madame Pelet to have removed since I had filled the post of professor in the pensionnat de demoiselles, as, from that time, it was no longer 'inconvenient' for me to overlook my own pupils at their sports. I sat down in the window-seat, rested my arm on the sill, and leaned out: above me was the clear-obscure of a cloudless night sky—

splendid moonlight subdued the tremulous sparkle of the stars—below lay the garden, varied with silvery lustre and deep shade, and all fresh with dew—a grateful perfume exhaled from the closed blossoms of the fruit-trees—not a leaf stirred, the night was breezeless. My window looked directly down upon a certain walk of Mdlle. Reuter's garden, called 'l'allée défendue,' so named because the pupils were forbidden to enter it on account of its proximity to the boys' school. It was here that the lilacs and laburnums grew especially thick; this was the most sheltered nook in the enclosure, its shrubs screened the garden-chair where that afternoon I had sat with the young directress. I need not say that my thoughts were chiefly with her as I leaned from the lattice, and let my eye roam, now over the walks and borders of the garden, now along the many-windowed front of the house, which rose white beyond the masses of foliage. I wondered in what part of the building was situated her apartment; and a single light, shining through the persiennes of one croisée, seemed to direct me to it.

'She watches late,' thought I, 'for it must be now near midnight. She is a fascinating little woman,' I continued in voiceless soliloquy; 'her image forms a pleasant picture in memory; I know she is not what the world calls pretty—no matter, there is harmony in her aspect, and I like it; her brown hair, her blue eye, the freshness of her cheek, the whiteness of her neck, all suit my taste. Then I respect her talent; the idea of marrying a doll or a fool was always abhorrent to me: I know that a pretty doll, a fair fool, might do well enough for the honeymoon; but when passion cooled, how dreadful to find a lump of wax and wood laid in my bosom, a half idiot clasped in my arms, and to remember that I had made of this my equal—nay, my idol—to know that I must pass the rest of my dreary life with a creature incapable of understanding what I said, of appreciating what I thought, or of sympathising with what I felt! 'Now, Zoraïde Reuter,' thought I, 'has tact, "caractère," judgment, discretion; has she heart? What a good, simple little smile played about her lips when she gave me the branch of lilacs! I have thought her crafty, dissembling, interested sometimes, it is true; but may not much that looks like cunning and dissimulation in her conduct be only the efforts made by a bland temper to traverse quietly perplexing difficulties? And as to interest, she wishes to make her way in the world, no doubt, and who can blame her? Even if she be truly deficient in sound principle, is it not rather her misfortune than her fault? She has been brought up a Catholic: had she been born an Englishwoman, and reared a Protestant, might she not have added straight integrity to all her other excellences? Supposing she were to marry an English and Protestant husband, would she not, rational, sensible as she is, quickly acknowledge the superiority of right over expediency, honesty over policy? It would be worth a man's while to try the experiment; to-morrow I will renew my observations. She knows that I watch her: how calm she is under scrutiny! it seems rather to gratify than annoy her.' Here a strain of music stole in upon my monologue, and suspended it; it was a bugle, very skilfully played, in the neighbourhood of the park, I thought, or on the Place Royale. So sweet were the tones, so subduing their effect at that hour, in the midst of silence and under the quiet reign of moonlight, I ceased to think, that I might listen more intently. The strain retreated, its sound waxed fainter and was soon gone; my ear prepared to repose on the absolute hush of midnight once more. No. What murmur was that which, low, and yet near and approaching nearer, frustrated the expectation of total silence? It was some one conversing—yes, evidently, an audible, though subdued voice spoke in the garden immediately below me. Another answered: the first voice was that of a man, the second that of a woman; and a man and a woman I saw coming slowly down the alley. Their forms were at first in shade, I could but discern a dusk outline of each, but a ray of moonlight met them at the termination of the walk, when they were under my very nose, and revealed very plainly, very unequivocally, Mdlle. Zoraïde Reuter, arm-in-arm, or hand-in-hand (I forget which) with my principal, confidant, and counsellor, M. François Pelet. And M. Pelet was saying—'A quand donc le jour des noces, ma bien-aimée?'

And Mdlle. Reuter answered—'Mais, François, tu sais bien qu'il me serait impossible de me marier avant les vacances.'

'June, July, August, a whole quarter!' exclaimed the director. 'How can I wait so long? I who am ready, even now, to expire at your feet with impatience!'

'Ah! if you die, the whole affair will be settled without any trouble about notaries and contracts; I shall only have to order a slight mourning dress, which will be much sooner prepared than the nuptial trousseau.'

'Cruel Zoraïde! you laugh at the distress of one who loves you so devotedly as I do; my torment is your sport; you scruple not to stretch my soul on the rack of jealousy; for, deny it as you will, I am certain you have cast encouraging glances on that school-boy, Crimsworth; he has presumed to fall in love, which he dared not have done unless you had given him room to hope.'

'What do you say, François? Do you say Crimsworth is in love with me?'

'Over head and ears.'

'Has he told you so?'

'No—but I see it in his face; he blushes whenever your name is mentioned.'

A little laugh of exulting coquetry announced Mdlle. Reuter's gratification at this piece of intelligence (which was a lie, by-the-by—I had never been so far gone as that, after all). M. Pelet proceeded to ask what she intended to do with me, intimating pretty plainly, and not very gallantly, that it was nonsense for her to think of taking such a 'blanc-bec' as a husband, since she must be at least ten years older than I (was she then thirty-two? I should not have thought it). I heard her disclaim any intentions on the subject—the director, however, still pressed her to give a definite answer.

'François,' said she, 'you are jealous,' and still she laughed; then, as if suddenly recollecting that this coquetry was not consistent with the character for modest dignity she wished to establish, she proceeded, in a demure voice: 'Truly, my dear François, I will not deny that this young Englishman may have made some attempts to ingratiate himself with me; but, so far from giving him any encouragement, I have always treated him with as much reserve as it was possible to combine with civility; affianced as I am to you, I would give no man false hopes; believe me, dear friend.'

Still Pelet uttered murmurs of distrust—so I judged, at least, from her reply.

'What folly! How could I prefer an unknown foreigner to you? And then—not to flatter your vanity—Crimsworth could not bear comparison with you either physically or mentally; he is not a handsome man at all; some may call him gentleman-like and intelligent-looking, but for my part——'

The rest of the sentence was lost in the distance, as the pair, rising from the chair in which they had been seated, moved away. I waited their return, but soon the opening and shutting of a door informed me that they had re-entered the house; I listened a little longer, all was perfectly still; I listened more than an hour—at last I heard M. Pelet come in and ascend to his chamber. Glancing once more towards the long front of the garden-house, I perceived that its solitary light was at length extinguished; so, for a time, was my faith in love and friendship. I went to bed, but something feverish and fiery had got into my veins which prevented me from sleeping much that night.

CHAPTER XIII

Next morning I rose with the dawn, and having dressed myself and stood half-an-hour, my elbow leaning on the chest of drawers, considering what means I should adopt to restore my spirits, fagged with sleeplessness, to their ordinary tone—for I had no intention of getting up a scene with M. Pelet, reproaching him with perfidy, sending him a challenge, or performing other gambadoes of the sort—I hit at last on the expedient of walking out in the cool of the morning to a neighbouring establishment of baths, and treating myself to a bracing plunge. The remedy produced the desired effect. I came back at seven o'clock steadied and invigorated, and was able to greet M. Pelet, when he entered to breakfast, with an unchanged and tranquil countenance; even a cordial offering of the hand and the flattering appellation of 'mon fils,' pronounced in that caressing tone with which Monsieur had, of late days especially, been accustomed to address me, did not elicit any external sign of the feeling which, though subdued, still glowed at my heart. Not that I nursed vengeance—no; but the sense of insult and treachery lived in me like a kindling, though as yet smothered coal. God knows I am not by nature vindictive; I would not hurt a man because I can no longer trust or like him; but neither my reason nor feelings are of the vacillating order—they are not of that sand-like sort where impressions, if soon made, are as soon effaced. Once convinced that my friend's disposition is incompatible with my own, once assured that he is indelibly stained with certain defects obnoxious to my principles, and I dissolve the connection. I did so with Edward. As to Pelet, the discovery was yet new; should I act thus with him? It was the question I placed before my mind as I stirred my cup of coffee with a half-pistolet (we never had spoons), Pelet meantime being seated opposite, his pallid face looking as knowing and more haggard than usual, his blue eye turned, now sternly on his boys and ushers, and now graciously on me.

'Circumstances must guide me,' said I; and meeting Pelet's false glance and insinuating smile, I thanked heaven that I had last night opened my window and read by the light of a full moon the true meaning of that guileful countenance. I felt half his master, because the reality of his nature was now known to me; smile and flatter as he would, I saw his soul lurk behind his smile, and heard in every one of his smooth phrases a voice interpreting their treacherous import.

But Zoraïde Reuter? Of course her defection had cut me to the quick? That sting must have gone too deep for any consolations of philosophy to be available in curing its smart? Not at all. The night fever over, I looked about for balm to that wound also, and found some nearer home than at Gilead. Reason was my physician; she began by proving that the prize I had missed was of little value: she admitted that, physically, Zoraïde might have suited me, but affirmed that our souls were not in harmony, and that discord must have resulted from the union of her mind with mine. She then insisted on the suppression of all repining, and commanded me rather to rejoice that I had escaped a snare. Her medicament did me good. I felt its strengthening effect when I met the directress the next day; its stringent operation on the nerves suffered no trembling, no faltering; it enabled me to face her with firmness, to pass her with ease. She had held out her hand to me—that I did not choose to see. She had greeted me with a charming smile—it fell on my heart like light on stone. I passed on to the estrade, she followed me; her eye, fastened on my face, demanded of every feature the meaning of my changed and careless manner. 'I will give her an answer,' thought I; and, meeting her gaze full, arresting, fixing her glance, I shot into her eyes, from my own, a look, where there was no respect, no love, no tenderness, no gallantry; where the strictest analysis could detect nothing but scorn, hardihood, irony. I made her bear it, and feel it; her steady countenance did not change, but her colour rose, and she approached me as if fascinated. She stepped on to the estrade, and stood close by my side; she had nothing to say. I would not relieve her embarrassment, and negligently turned over the leaves of a book.

'I hope you feel quite recovered to-day,' at last she said, in a low tone.

'And I, Mademoiselle, hope that you took no cold last night in consequence of your late walk in the garden.'

Quick enough of comprehension, she understood me directly; her face became a little blanched—a very little—but no muscle in her rather marked features moved; and, calm and self-possessed, she retired from the estrade, taking her seat quietly at a little distance, and occupying herself with netting a purse. I proceeded to give my lesson; it was a 'Composition,' *i.e.*, I dictated certain general questions, of which the pupils were to compose the answers from memory, access to books being forbidden. While Mdlle. Eulalie, Hortense, Caroline, &c., were pondering over the string of rather abstruse grammatical interrogatories I had propounded, I was at liberty to employ the vacant half-hour in further observing the directress herself. The green silk purse was progressing fast in her hands; her eyes were bent upon it; her attitude, as she sat netting within two yards of me, was still yet guarded; in her whole person were expressed at once, and with equal clearness, vigilance and repose—a rare union! Looking at her, I was forced, as I had often been before, to offer her good sense, her wondrous self-control, the tribute of involuntary admiration. She had felt that I had withdrawn from her my esteem;

she had seen contempt and coldness in my eye, and to her, who coveted the approbation of all around her, who thirsted after universal good opinion, such discovery must have been an acute wound. I had witnessed its effect in the momentary pallor of her cheek—cheek unused to vary; yet how quickly, by dint of self-control, had she recovered her composure! With what quiet dignity she now sat, almost at my side, sustained by her sound and vigorous sense; no trembling in her somewhat lengthened, though shrewd upper lip, no coward shame on her austere forehead!

'There is metal there,' I said, as I gazed. 'Would that there were fire also, living ardour to make the steel glow—then I could love her.'

Presently I discovered that she knew I was watching her, for she stirred not, she lifted not her crafty eyelid; she had glanced down from her netting to her small foot, peeping from the soft folds of her purple merino gown; thence her eye reverted to her hand, ivory white, with a bright garnet ring on the forefinger, and a light frill of lace round the wrist; with a scarcely perceptible movement she turned her head, causing her nut-brown curls to wave gracefully. In these slight signs I read that the wish of her heart, the design of her brain, was to lure back the game she had scared. A little incident gave her the opportunity of addressing me again.

While all was silence in the class—silence, but for the rustling of copy-books and the travelling of pens over their pages—a leaf of the large folding-door, opening from the hall, unclosed, admitting a pupil who, after making a hasty obeisance, ensconced herself with some appearance of trepidation, probably occasioned by her entering so late, in a vacant seat at the desk nearest the door. Being seated, she proceeded, still with an air of hurry and embarrassment, to open her cabas, to take out her books; and, while I was waiting for her to look up, in order to make out her identity—for, short-sighted as I was, I had not recognised her at her entrance—Mdlle. Reuter, leaving her chair, approached the estrade.

'Monsieur Creemsvort,' said she, in a whisper: for when the schoolrooms were silent, the directress always moved with velvet tread, and spoke in the most subdued key, enforcing order and stillness fully as much by example as precept: 'Monsieur Creemsvort, that young person, who has just entered, wishes to have the advantage of taking lessons with you in English; she is not a pupil of the house; she is, indeed, in one sense, a teacher, for she gives instruction in lace-mending, and in little varieties of ornamental needlework. She very properly proposes to qualify herself for a higher department of education, and has asked permission to attend your lessons, in order to perfect her knowledge of English, in which language she has, I believe, already made some progress; of course it is my wish to aid her in an effort so praiseworthy; you will permit her then to benefit by your instruction—n'est-ce pas, Monsieur?' And Mdlle. Reuter's eyes were raised to mine with a look at once naïve, benign, and beseeching.

I replied, 'Of course,' very laconically, almost abruptly.

'Another word,' she said, with softness: 'Mdlle. Henri has not received a regular education; perhaps her natural talents are not of the highest order: but I can assure you of the excellence of her intentions, and even of the amiability of her disposition. Monsieur will then, I am sure, have the goodness to be considerate with her at first, and not expose her backwardness, her inevitable deficiencies, before the young ladies, who, in a sense, are her pupils. Will Monsieur Creemsvort favour me by attending to this hint?'

I nodded.

She continued with subdued earnestness—'Pardon me, Monsieur, if I venture to add that what I have just said is of importance to the poor girl; she already experiences great difficulty in impressing these giddy young things with a due degree of deference for her authority, and should that difficulty be increased by new discoveries of her incapacity, she might find her position in my establishment too painful to be retained; a circumstance I should much regret for her sake, as she can ill afford to lose the profits of her occupation here.'

Mdlle. Reuter possessed marvellous tact; but tact the most exquisite, unsupported by sincerity, will sometimes fail of its effect; thus, on this occasion, the longer she preached about the necessity of being indulgent to the governess-pupil, the more impatient I felt as I listened. I discerned so clearly that while her professed motive was a wish to aid the dull, though well-meaning Mdlle. Henri, her real one was no other than a design to impress me with an idea of her own exalted goodness and tender considerateness; so having again hastily nodded assent to her remarks, I obviated their renewal by suddenly demanding the compositions, in a sharp accent, and stepping from the estrade, I proceeded to collect them. As I passed the governess-pupil, I said to her—'You have come in too late to receive a lesson to-day; try to be more punctual next time.'

I was behind her, and could not read in her face the effect of my not very civil speech. Probably I should not have troubled myself to do so, had I been full in front; but I observed that she immediately began to slip her books into her cabas again; and, presently, after I had returned to the estrade, while I was arranging the mass of compositions, I heard the folding-door again open and close; and, on looking up, I perceived her place vacant. I thought to myself, 'She will consider her first attempt at taking a lesson in English something of a failure;' and I wondered whether she had departed in the sulks, or whether stupidity had induced her to take my words too literally, or, finally, whether my irritable tone had wounded her feelings. The last notion I dismissed almost as soon as I had conceived it, for not having seen any appearance of sensitiveness in any human face since my arrival in Belgium, I had begun to regard it almost as a fabulous quality. Whether her physiognomy announced it I could not tell, for her speedy exit had allowed me no time to ascertain the circumstance. I had, indeed, on two or three previous occasions, caught a passing view of her (as I believe has been mentioned before); but I had never stopped to scrutinise either her face or person, and had but the most vague idea of her general appearance. Just as I had finished rolling up the compositions, the four-o'clock bell rang; with my accustomed alertness in obeying that signal, I grasped my hat and evacuated the premises.

CHAPTER XIV

If I was punctual in quitting Mdlle. Reuter's domicile, I was at least equally punctual in arriving there; I came the next day at five minutes before two, and on reaching the schoolroom door, before I opened it, I heard a rapid, gabbling sound, which warned me that the 'prière du midi' was not yet concluded. I waited the termination thereof; it would have been impious to intrude my heretical presence during its progress. How the repeater of the prayer did cackle and splutter! I never before or since heard language enounced with such steam-engine haste. 'Notre Père qui êtes au ciel' went off like a shot; then followed an address to Marie, 'vierge céleste, reine des anges, maison d'or, tour d'ivoire!' and then an invocation to the saint of the day; and then down they all sat, and the solemn (?) rite was over; and I entered, flinging the door wide and striding in fast, as it was my wont to do now; for I had found that in entering with aplomb, and mounting the estrade with emphasis, consisted the grand secret of ensuring immediate silence. The folding-doors between the two classes, opened for the prayer, were instantly closed; a maîtresse, work-box in hand, took her seat at her appropriate desk; the pupils sat still with their pens and books before them; my three beauties in the van, now well humbled by a demeanour of consistent coolness, sat erect with their hands folded quietly on their knees; they had given up giggling and whispering to each other, and no longer ventured to utter pert speeches in my presence; they now only talked to me occasionally with their eyes, by means of which organs they could still, however, say very audacious and coquettish things. Had affection, goodness, modesty, real talent, ever employed those bright orbs as interpreters, I do not think I could have refrained from giving a kind and encouraging, perhaps an ardent reply now and then; but as it was, I found pleasure in answering the glance of vanity with the gaze of stoicism. Youthful, fair, brilliant, as were many of my pupils, I can truly say that in me they never saw any other bearing than such as an austere, though just guardian, might have observed towards them. If any doubt the accuracy of this assertion, as inferring more conscientious self-denial or Scipio-like self-control than they feel disposed to give me credit for, let them take into consideration the following circumstances, which, while detracting from my merit, justify my veracity.

Know, O incredulous reader! that a master stands in a somewhat different relation towards a pretty, light-headed, probably ignorant girl, to that occupied by a partner at a ball, or a gallant on the promenade. A professor does not meet his pupil to see her dressed in satin and muslin, with hair perfumed and curled, neck scarcely shaded by aërial lace, round white arms circled with bracelets, feet dressed for the gliding dance. It is not his business to whirl her through the waltz, to feed her with compliments, to heighten her beauty by the flush of gratified vanity. Neither does he encounter her on the smooth-rolled, tree-shaded Boulevard, in the green and sunny park, whither she repairs clad in her becoming walking-dress, her scarf thrown with grace over her shoulders, her little bonnet scarcely screening her curls, the red rose under its brim adding a new tint to the softer rose on her cheek; her face and eyes, too, illumined with smiles, perhaps as transient as the sunshine of the gala-day, but also quite as brilliant; it is not his office to walk by her side, to listen to her lively chat, to carry her parasol, scarcely larger than a broad green leaf, to lead in a ribbon her Blenheim spaniel or Italian greyhound. No: he finds her in the schoolroom, plainly dressed, with books before her. Owing to her education or her nature books are to her a nuisance, and she opens them with aversion, yet her teacher must instil into her mind the contents of these books; that mind resists the admission of grave information, it recoils, it grows restive, sullen tempers are shown, disfiguring frowns spoil the symmetry of the face, sometimes coarse gestures banish grace from the deportment, while muttered expressions, redolent of native and ineradicable vulgarity, desecrate the sweetness of the voice. Where the temperament is serene though the intellect be sluggish, an unconquerable dulness opposes every effort to instruct. Where there is cunning but not energy, dissimulation, falsehood, a thousand schemes and tricks are put in play to evade the necessity of application; in short, to the tutor, female youth, female charms are like tapestry hangings, of which the wrong side is continually turned towards him; and even when he sees the smooth, neat external surface, he so well knows what knots, long stitches, and jagged ends are behind that he has scarce a temptation to admire too fondly the seemly forms and bright colours exposed to general view.

Our likings are regulated by our circumstances. The artist prefers a hilly country because it is picturesque; the engineer a flat one because it is convenient; the man of pleasure likes what he calls 'a fine woman'—she suits him; the fashionable young gentleman admires the fashionable young lady—she is of his kind; the toil-worn, fagged, probably irritable tutor, blind almost to beauty, insensible to airs and graces, glories chiefly in certain mental qualities: application, love of knowledge, natural capacity, docility, truthfulness, gratefulness, are the charms that attract his notice and win his regard. These he seeks, but seldom meets; these, if by chance he finds, he would fain retain for ever, and when separation deprives him of them he feels as if some ruthless hand had snatched from him his only ewe-lamb. Such being the case, and the case it is, my readers will agree with me that there was nothing either very meritorious or very marvellous in the integrity and moderation of my conduct at Mdlle. Reuter's pensionnat de demoiselles.

My first business this afternoon consisted in reading the list of places for the month, determined by the relative correctness of the compositions given the preceding day. The list was headed, as usual, by the name of Sylvie, that plain, quiet little girl I have described before as being at once the best and ugliest pupil in the establishment; the second place had fallen to the lot of a certain Léonie Ledru, a diminutive, sharp-featured, and parchment-skinned creature of quick wits, frail conscience, and indurated feelings; a lawyer-like thing, of whom I used to say that, had she been a boy, she would have made a model of an unprincipled, clever attorney. Then came Eulalie, the proud beauty, the Juno of the school, whom six long years of drilling in the simple grammar of the English language had compelled, despite the stiff phlegm of her intellect, to acquire a mechanical acquaintance with most of its rules. No smile, no trace of pleasure or satisfaction appeared in Sylvie's nun-like and passive face as she heard her name read first. I always felt saddened by the sight of that poor girl's absolute quiescence on all occasions, and it was my custom to look at her, to address her, as seldom as possible; her extreme docility, her assiduous perseverance, would have recommended her warmly to my good opinion; her modesty, her intelligence, would have induced me to feel most kindly—most affectionately towards her, notwithstanding the almost ghastly plainness of her features, the disproportion of her form, the corpse-like lack of animation in her countenance, had I not been aware that every friendly word, every kindly action, would be reported by her to her confessor, and by him misinterpreted and poisoned. Once I laid my hand on her head, in token of approbation; I thought Sylvie was going to smile, her dim eye almost kindled; but, presently, she shrank from me; I was a man and a heretic; she, poor child! a destined nun and devoted Catholic: thus a four-fold wall of separation divided her mind from mine. A pert smirk, and a hard glance of triumph, was Léonie's method of testifying her gratification; Eulalie looked sullen and envious—she had hoped to be first. Hortense and Caroline exchanged a reckless grimace on hearing their names read out somewhere near the bottom of the list; the brand of mental inferiority was considered by them as no disgrace, their hopes for the future being based solely on their personal attractions.

This affair arranged, the regular lesson followed. During a brief interval, employed by the pupils in ruling their books, my eye, ranging carelessly over the benches, observed, for the first time, that the farthest seat in the farthest row—a seat usually vacant—was again filled by the new scholar, the Mdlle. Henri so ostentatiously recommended to me by the directress. To-day I had on my spectacles; her appearance, therefore, was clear to me at the first glance; I had not to puzzle over it. She looked young; yet, had I been required to name her exact age, I should have been somewhat nonplussed; the slightness of her figure might have suited seventeen; a certain anxious and preoccupied expression of face seemed the indication of riper years. She was dressed, like all the rest, in a dark stuff gown and a white collar; her features were dissimilar to any there, not so rounded, more defined, yet scarcely regular. The shape of her head too was different, the superior part more developed, the base considerably less. I felt assured, at first sight, that she was not a Belgian; her complexion, her countenance, her lineaments, her figure, were all distinct from theirs, and evidently the type of another race—of a race less gifted with fulness of flesh and plenitude of blood; less jocund, material, unthinking. When I first cast my eyes on her, she sat looking fixedly down, her chin resting on her hand, and she did not change her attitude till I commenced the lesson. None of the Belgian girls would have retained one position, and that a reflective one, for the same length of time. Yet, having intimated that her appearance was peculiar, as being unlike that of her Flemish companions, I have little more to say respecting it; I can pronounce no encomiums on her beauty, for she was not beautiful; nor offer condolence on her plainness, for neither was she plain; a careworn character of forehead, and a corresponding moulding of the mouth, struck me with a sentiment resembling surprise, but these traits would probably have passed unnoticed by any less crotchety observer.

Now, reader, though I have spent more than a page in describing Mdlle. Henri, I know well enough that I have left on your mind's eye no distinct picture of her; I have not painted her complexion, nor her eyes, nor her hair, nor even drawn the outline of her shape. You cannot tell whether her nose was aquiline or retroussé, whether her chin was long or short, her face square or oval; nor could I the first day, and it is not my intention to communicate to you at once a knowledge I myself gained by little and little.

I gave a short exercise which they all wrote down. I saw the new pupil was puzzled at first with the novelty of the form and language; once or twice she looked at me with a sort of painful solicitude, as not comprehending at all what I meant; then she was not ready when the others were, she could not write her phrases so fast as they did; I would not help her, I went on relentless. She looked at me; her eye said most plainly, 'I cannot follow you.' I disregarded the appeal, and, carelessly leaning back in my chair, glancing from time to time with a *nonchalant* air out of the window, I dictated a little faster. On looking towards her again, I perceived her face clouded with embarrassment, but she was still writing on most diligently; I paused a few seconds; she employed the interval in hurriedly re-perusing what she had written, and shame and discomfiture were apparent in her countenance; she evidently found she had made great nonsense of it. In ten minutes more the dictation was complete, and, having allowed a brief space in which to correct it, I took their books; it was with a reluctant hand Mdlle. Henri gave up hers, but, having once yielded it to my possession, she composed her anxious face, as if, for the present, she had resolved to dismiss regret, and had made up her mind to be thought unprecedentedly stupid. Glancing over her exercise, I found that several lines had been omitted, but what was written contained very few faults; I instantly inscribed 'Bon' at the bottom of the page, and returned it to her; she smiled, at first incredulously, then as if reassured, but did not lift her eyes; she could look at me, it seemed, when perplexed and bewildered, but not when gratified; I thought that scarcely fair.

CHAPTER XV

Some time elapsed before I again gave a lesson in the first class; the holiday of Whitsuntide occupied three days, and on the fourth it was the turn of the second division to receive my instructions. As I made the transit of the carré, I observed, as usual, the band of sewers surrounding Mdlle. Henri; there were only about a dozen of them, but they made as much noise as might have sufficed for fifty; they seemed very little under her control; three or four at once assailed her with importunate requirements; she looked harassed, she demanded silence, but in vain. She saw me, and I read in her eye pain that a stranger should witness the insubordination of her pupils; she seemed to entreat order—her prayers were useless; then I remarked that she compressed her lips and contracted her brow; and her countenance, if I read it correctly, said—'I have done my best; I seem to merit blame notwithstanding; blame me then who will.' I passed on; as I closed the schoolroom door, I heard her say, suddenly and sharply, addressing one of the eldest and most turbulent of the lot, 'Amélie Müllenberg, ask me no question, and request of me no assistance for a week to come; during that space of time I will neither speak to you nor help you.'

The words were uttered with emphasis—nay, with vehemence—and a comparative silence followed; whether the calm was permanent, I know not; two doors now closed between me and the carré.

Next day was appropriated to the first class; on my arrival, I found the directress seated, as usual, in a chair between the two estrades, and before her was standing Mdlle. Henri, in an attitude (as it seemed to me) of somewhat reluctant attention. The directress was knitting and talking at the same time. Amidst the hum of a large schoolroom, it was easy so to speak in the ear of one person as to be heard by that person alone, and it was thus Mdlle. Reuter parleyed with her teacher. The face of the latter was a little flushed, not a little troubled; there was vexation in it, whence resulting I know not, for the directress looked very placid indeed; she could not be scolding in such gentle whispers, and with so equable a mien; no, it was presently proved that her discourse had been of the most friendly tendency, for I heard the closing words, 'C'est assez, ma bonne amie; à présent je ne veux pas vous retenir davantage.'

Without reply, Mdlle. Henri turned away; dissatisfaction was plainly evinced in her face, and a smile, slight and brief, but bitter, distrustful, and, I thought, scornful, curled her lip as she took her place in the class; it was a secret, involuntary smile, which lasted but a second; an air of depression succeeded, chased away presently by one of attention and interest, when I gave the word for all the pupils to take their reading-books. In general I hated the reading-lesson, it was such a torture to the ear to listen to their uncouth mouthing of my native tongue, and no effort of example or precept on my part ever seemed to effect the slightest improvement in their accent. To-day, each in her appropriate key, lisped, stuttered, mumbled, and jabbered as usual; about fifteen had racked me in turn, and my auricular nerve was expecting with resignation the discords of the sixteenth, when a full, though low voice, read out, in clear, correct English, 'On his way to Perth, the king was met by a Highland woman, calling herself a prophetess; she stood at the side of the ferry by which he was about to travel to the north, and cried with a loud voice, "My lord the king, if you pass this water you will never return again alive!"'—(*vide* the 'History of Scotland')

I looked up in amazement; the voice was a voice of Albion; the accent was pure and silvery; it only wanted firmness and assurance to be the counterpart of what any well-educated lady in Essex or Middlesex might have enounced, yet the speaker or reader was no other than Mdlle. Henri, in whose grave, joyless face I saw no mark of consciousness that she had performed any extraordinary feat. No one else evinced surprise either. Mdlle. Reuter knitted away assiduously; I was aware, however, that at the conclusion of the paragraph she had lifted her eyelid and honoured me with a glance sideways; she did not know the full excellency of the teacher's style of reading, but she perceived that her accent was not that of the others, and wanted to discover what I thought; I masked my visage with indifference, and ordered the next girl to proceed.

When the lesson was over, I took advantage of the confusion caused by breaking up to approach Mdlle. Henri; she was standing near the window, and retired as I advanced; she thought I wanted to look out, and did not imagine that I could have anything to say to her. I took her exercise-book out of her hand; as I turned over the leaves I addressed her: 'You have had lessons in English before?' I asked.

'No, sir.'

'No! you read it well; you have been in England?'

'Oh, no!' with some animation.

'You have been in English families?'

Still the answer was 'No.' Here my eye, resting on the flyleaf of the book, saw written, 'Frances Evans Henri.'

'Your name?' I asked.

'Yes, sir.'

My interrogations were cut short; I heard a little rustling behind me, and close at my back was the directress, professing to be examining the interior of a desk.

'Mademoiselle,' said she, looking up and addressing the teacher, 'will you have the goodness to go and stand in the corridor, while the young ladies are putting on their things, and try to keep some order?'

Mdlle. Henri obeyed.

'What splendid weather!' observed the directress cheerfully, glancing at the same time from the window. I assented and was withdrawing. 'What of your new pupil, Monsieur?' continued she, following my retreating steps. 'Is she likely to make progress in English?'

'Indeed I can hardly judge. She possesses a pretty good accent; of her real knowledge of the language I have as yet had no opportunity of forming an opinion.'

'And her natural capacity, Monsieur? I have had my fears about that: can you relieve me by an assurance at least of its average power?'

'I see no reason to doubt its average power, Mademoiselle, but really I scarcely know her, and have not had time to study the calibre of her capacity. I wish you a very good afternoon.'

She still pursued me. 'You will observe, Monsieur, and tell me what you think; I could so much better rely on your opinion than on my own; women cannot judge of these things as men can, and, excuse my pertinacity, Monsieur, but it is natural I should feel interested about this poor little girl (pauvre petite); she has scarcely any relations, her own efforts are all she has to look to, her acquirements must be her sole fortune; her present position has once been mine, or nearly so; it is then but natural I should sympathize with her; and sometimes, when I see the difficulty she has in managing pupils, I feel quite chagrined. I doubt not she does her best, her intentions are excellent; but, Monsieur, she wants tact and firmness. I have talked to her on the subject, but I am not fluent, and probably did not express myself with clearness; she never appears to comprehend me. Now, would you occasionally, when you see an opportunity, slip in a word of advice to her on the subject; men have so much more influence than women have—they argue so much more logically than we do; and you, Monsieur, in particular, have so paramount a power of making yourself obeyed; a word of advice from you could not but do her good; even if she were sullen and headstrong (which I hope she is not) she would scarcely refuse to listen to you; for my own part, I can truly say that I never attend one of your lessons without deriving benefit from witnessing your management of the pupils. The other masters are a constant source of anxiety to me; they cannot impress the young ladies with sentiments of respect, nor restrain the levity natural to youth: in you, Monsieur, I feel the most absolute confidence; try then to put this poor child into the way of controlling our giddy, high-spirited Brabantoises. But, Monsieur, I would add one word more; don't alarm her *amour propre;* beware of inflicting a wound there. I reluctantly admit that in that particular she is blamably—some would say ridiculously—susceptible. I fear I have touched this sore point inadvertently, and she cannot get over it.'

During the greater part of this harangue my hand was on the lock of the outer door; I now turned it.

'Au revoir, Mademoiselle,' said I, and I escaped. I saw the directress's stock of words was yet far from exhausted. She looked after me, she would fain have detained me longer. Her manner towards me had been altered ever since I had begun to treat her with hardness and indifference: she almost cringed to me on every occasion; she consulted my countenance incessantly, and beset me with innumerable little officious attentions. Servility creates despotism. This slavish homage, instead of softening my heart, only pampered whatever was stern and exacting in its mood. The very circumstance of her hovering round me like a fascinated bird, seemed to transform me into a rigid pillar of stone; her flatteries irritated my scorn, her blandishments confirmed my reserve. At times I wondered what she meant by giving herself such trouble to win me, when the more profitable Pelet was already in her nets, and when, too, she was aware that I possessed her secret, for I had not scrupled to tell her as much: but the fact is, that as it was her nature to doubt the reality and undervalue the worth of modesty, affection, disinterestedness—to regard these qualities as foibles of character—so it was equally her tendency to consider pride, hardness, selfishness, as proofs of strength. She would trample on the neck of humility, she would kneel at the feet of disdain; she would meet tenderness with secret contempt, indifference she would woo with ceaseless assiduities. Benevolence, devotedness, enthusiasm, were her antipathies; for dissimulation and self-interest she had a preference—they were real wisdom in her eyes; moral and physical degradation, mental and bodily inferiority, she regarded with indulgence; they were foils capable of being turned to good account as set-offs for her own endowments. To violence, injustice, tyranny, she succumbed—they were her natural masters; she had no propensity to hate, no impulse to resist them; the indignation their behests awake in some hearts was unknown in hers. From all this it resulted that the false and selfish called her wise, the vulgar and debased termed her charitable, the insolent and unjust dubbed her amiable, the conscientious and benevolent generally at first accepted as valid her claim to be considered one of themselves; but ere long the plating of pretension wore off, the real material appeared below, and they laid her aside as a deception.

CHAPTER XVI

In the course of another fortnight I had seen sufficient of Frances Evans Henri to enable me to form a more definite opinion of her character. I found her possessed in a somewhat remarkable degree of at least two good points, viz. perseverance and a sense of duty; I found she was really capable of applying to study, of contending with difficulties. At first I offered her the same help which I had always found it necessary to confer on the others; I began with unloosing for her each knotty point, but I soon discovered that such help was regarded by my new pupil as degrading; she recoiled from it with a certain proud impatience. Hereupon I appointed her long lessons, and left her to solve alone any perplexities they might present. She set to the task with serious ardour, and having quickly accomplished one labour, eagerly demanded more. So much for her perseverance; as to her sense of duty, it evinced itself thus: she liked to learn, but hated to teach; her progress as a pupil depended upon herself, and I saw that on herself she could calculate with certainty; her success as a teacher rested partly, perhaps chiefly, upon the will of others; it cost her a most painful effort to enter into conflict with this foreign will, to endeavour to bend it into subjection to her own; for in what regarded people in general the action of her will was impeded by many scruples; it was as unembarrassed as strong where her own affairs were concerned, and to it she could at any time subject her inclination, if that inclination went counter to her convictions of right; yet when called upon to wrestle with the propensities, the habits, the faults of others, of children especially, who are deaf to reason, and, for the most part, insensate to persuasion, her will sometimes almost refused to act; then came in the sense of duty, and forced the reluctant will into operation. A wasteful expense of energy and labour was frequently the consequence; Frances toiled for and with her pupils like a drudge, but it was long ere her conscientious exertions were rewarded by anything like docility on their part, because they saw that they had power over her, inasmuch as by resisting her painful attempts to convince, persuade, control—by forcing her to the employment of coercive measures—they could inflict upon her exquisite suffering. Human beings—human children especially—seldom deny themselves the pleasure of exercising a power which they are conscious of possessing, even though that power consist only in a capacity to make others wretched; a pupil whose sensations are duller than those of his instructor, while his nerves are tougher and his bodily strength perhaps greater, has an immense advantage over that instructor, and he will generally use it relentlessly, because the very young, very healthy, very thoughtless, know neither how to sympathize nor how to spare. Frances, I fear, suffered much; a continual weight seemed to oppress her spirits; I have said she did not live in the house, and whether in her own abode, wherever that might be, she wore the same preoccupied, unsmiling, sorrowfully resolved air that always shaded her features under the roof of Mdlle. Reuter, I could not tell.

One day I gave, as a devoir, the trite little anecdote of Alfred tending cakes in the herdsman's hut, to be related with amplifications. A singular affair most of the pupils made of it; brevity was what they had chiefly studied; the majority of the narratives were perfectly unintelligible; those of Sylvie and Léonie Ledru alone pretended to anything like sense and connection. Eulalie, indeed, had hit upon a clever expedient for at once ensuring accuracy and saving trouble; she had obtained access somehow to an abridged history of England, and had copied the anecdote out fair. I wrote on the margin of her production 'Stupid and deceitful,' and then tore it down the middle.

Last in the pile of single-leaved devoirs, I found one of several sheets, neatly written out and stitched together; I knew the hand, and scarcely needed the evidence of the signature, 'Frances Evans Henri,' to confirm my conjecture as to the writer's identity.

Night was my usual time for correcting devoirs, and my own room the usual scene of such task—task most onerous hitherto; and it seemed strange to me to feel rising within me an incipient sense of interest, as I snuffed the candle and addressed myself to the perusal of the poor teacher's manuscript.

'Now,' thought I, 'I shall see a glimpse of what she really is; I shall get an idea of the nature and extent of her powers; not that she can be expected to express herself well in a foreign tongue, but still, if she has any mind, here will be a reflection of it.'

The narrative commenced by a description of a Saxon peasant's hut, situated within the confines of a great, leafless, winter forest; it represented an evening in December; flakes of snow were falling, and the herdsman foretold a heavy storm; he summoned his wife to aid him in collecting their flock, roaming far away on the pastoral banks of the Thone; he warns her that it will be late ere they return. The good woman is reluctant to quit her occupation of baking cakes for the evening meal; but acknowledging the primary importance of securing the herds and flocks, she puts on her sheep-skin mantle; and, addressing a stranger, who rests half reclined on a bed of rushes near the hearth, bids him mind the bread till her return.

'Take care, young man,' she continues, 'that you fasten the door well after us; and, above all, open to none in our absence; whatever sound you hear, stir not, and look not out. The night will soon fall; this forest is most wild and lonely; strange noises are often heard therein after sunset; wolves haunt these glades, and Danish warriors infest the country; worse things are talked of; you might chance to hear, as it were, a child cry, and on opening the door to afford it succour, a great black bull, or a shadowy goblin dog, might rush over the threshold; or, more awful still, if something flapped, as with wings, against the lattice, and then a raven or a white dove flew in and settled on the hearth, such a visitor would be a sure sign of misfortune to the house; therefore, heed my advice, and lift the latchet for nothing.'

Her husband calls her away, both depart. The stranger, left alone, listens awhile to the muffled snow-wind, the remote, swollen sound of the river, then he speaks.

'It is Christmas eve,' says he, 'I mark the date; here I sit alone on a rude couch of rushes, sheltered by the thatch of a herdsman's hut; I, whose inheritance was a kingdom, owe my night's harbourage to a poor serf; my throne is usurped, my crown presses the brow of an invader; I have no friends; my troops wander broken in the hills of Wales; reckless robbers spoil my country; my subjects lie prostrate, their breasts crushed by the heel of the brutal Dane. Fate! thou hast done thy worst, and now thou standest before me resting thy hand on thy blunted blade. Ay; I see thine eye confront mine and demand why I still live, why I still hope. Pagan demon, I credit not thine omnipotence, and so cannot succumb to thy power. My God, whose Son, as on this night, took on Him the form of man, and for man vouchsafed to suffer and bleed, controls thy hand, and without His behest thou canst not strike a stroke. My God is sinless, eternal, all-wise—in Him is my trust; and though stripped and crushed by thee—though naked, desolate, void of resource—I do not despair, I cannot despair: were the lance of Guthrum now wet with my blood, I should not despair. I watch, I toil, I hope, I pray; Jehovah, in His own time, will aid.'

I need not continue the quotation; the whole devoir was in the same strain. There were errors of orthography, there were foreign idioms, there were some faults of construction, there were verbs irregular transformed into verbs regular; it was mostly made up, as the above example shows, of short and somewhat rude sentences, and the style stood in great need of polish and sustained dignity; yet such as it was, I had hitherto seen nothing like it in the course of my professorial experience. The girl's mind had conceived a picture of the hut, of the two peasants, of the crownless king; she had imagined the wintry forest, she had recalled the old Saxon ghost-legends, she had appreciated Alfred's courage under calamity, she had remembered his Christian education, and had shown him, with the rooted confidence of those primitive days, relying on the scriptural Jehovah for aid against the mythological Destiny. This she had done without a hint from me: I had given the subject, but not said a word about the manner of treating it.

'I will find, or make, an opportunity of speaking to her,' I said to myself as I rolled the devoir up; 'I will learn what she has of English in her besides the name of Frances Evans; she is no novice in the language, that is evident, yet she told me she had neither been in England, nor taken lessons in English, nor lived in English families.'

In the course of my next lesson, I made a report of the other devoirs, dealing out praise and blame in very small retail parcels, according to my custom, for there was no use in blaming severely, and high encomiums were rarely merited. I said nothing of Mdlle. Henri's exercise, and, spectacles on nose, I endeavoured to decipher in her countenance her sentiments at the omission. I wanted to find out whether in her existed a consciousness of her own talents. 'If she thinks she did a clever thing in composing that devoir, she will now look mortified,' thought I. Grave as usual, almost sombre, was her face; as usual, her eyes were fastened on the cahier open before her; there was something, I thought, of expectation in her attitude, as I concluded a brief review of the last devoir, and when, casting it from me and rubbing my hands, I bade them take their grammars, some slight change did pass over her air and mien, as though she now relinquished a faint prospect of pleasant excitement; she had been waiting for something to be discussed in which she had a degree of interest; the discussion was not to come on, so expectation sank back, shrunk and sad, but attention, promptly filling up the void, repaired in a moment the transient collapse of feature; still, I felt, rather than saw, during the whole course of the lesson, that a hope had been wrenched from her, and that if she did not show distress, it was because she would not.

At four o'clock, when the bell rang and the room was in immediate tumult, instead of taking my hat and starting from the estrade, I sat still a moment. I looked at Frances, she was putting her books into her cabas; having fastened the button, she raised her head; encountering my eye, she made a quiet, respectful obeisance, as bidding good afternoon, and was turning to depart.

'Come here,' said I, lifting my finger at the same time. She hesitated; she could not hear the words amidst the uproar now pervading both schoolrooms, I repeated the sign: she approached; again she paused within half a yard of the estrade, and looked shy, and still doubtful whether she had mistaken my meaning.

'Step up,' I said, speaking with decision. It is the only way of dealing with diffident, easily-embarrassed characters, and with some slight manual aid I presently got her placed just where I wanted her to be, that is, between my desk and the window, where she was screened from the rush of the second division, and where no one could sneak behind her to listen.

'Take a seat,' I said, placing a tabouret; and I made her sit down. I knew what I was doing would be considered a very strange thing, and, what was more, I did not care. Frances knew it also, and, I fear, by an appearance of agitation and trembling, that she cared much. I drew from my pocket the rolled-up devoir.

'This is yours, I suppose?' said I, addressing her in English, for I now felt sure she could speak English.

'Yes,' she answered distinctly; and as I unrolled it and laid it out flat on the desk before her with my hand upon it, and a pencil in that hand, I saw her moved, and, as it were, kindled; her depression beamed as a cloud might behind which the sun is burning.

'This devoir has numerous faults,' said I. 'It will take you some years of careful study before you are in a condition to write English with absolute correctness. Attend: I will point out some principal defects.' And I went through it carefully, noting every error, and demonstrating why they were errors, and how the words or phrases ought to have been written. In the course of this sobering process she became calm. I now went on:—'As to the substance of your devoir, Mdlle. Henri, it has surprised me; I perused it with pleasure, because I saw in it some proofs of taste and fancy. Taste and fancy are not the highest gifts of the human mind, but such as they are you possess them—not probably in a paramount degree, but in a degree beyond what the majority can boast. You may then take courage; cultivate the faculties that God and nature have bestowed on you, and do not fear in any crisis of suffering, under any pressure of injustice, to derive free and full consolation from the consciousness of their strength and rarity.'

'Strength and rarity!' I repeated to myself; 'ay, the words are probably true,' for on looking up, I saw the sun had dissevered its screening cloud, her countenance was transfigured, a smile shone in her eyes—a smile almost triumphant; it seemed to say—'I am glad you have been forced to discover so much of my nature; you need not so carefully moderate your language. Do you think I am myself a stranger to myself? What you tell me in terms so qualified, I have known fully from a child.'

She did say this as plainly as a frank and flashing glance could, but in a moment the glow of her complexion, the radiance of her aspect, had subsided; if strongly conscious of her talents, she was equally conscious of her harassing defects, and the remembrance of these obliterated for a single second, now reviving with sudden force, at once subdued the too vivid characters in which her sense of her powers had been expressed. So quick was the revulsion of feeling, I had not time to check her triumph by reproof ; ere I could contract my brows to a frown she had become serious and almost mournful-looking.

'Thank you, sir,' said she, rising. There was gratitude both in her voice and in the look with which she accompanied it. It was time, indeed, for our conference to terminate ; for, when I glanced around, behold all the boarders (the day-scholars had departed) were congregated within a yard or two of my desk, and stood staring with eyes and mouths wide open ; the three maîtresses formed a whispering knot in one corner, and, close at my elbow, was the directress, sitting on a low chair, calmly clipping the tassels of her finished purse.

CHAPTER XVII

After all I had profited but imperfectly by the opportunity I had so boldly achieved of speaking to Mdlle. Henri; it was my intention to ask her how she came to be possessed of two English baptismal names, Frances and Evans, in addition to her French surname, also whence she derived her good accent. I had forgotten both points, or, rather, our colloquy had been so brief that I had not had time to bring them forward; moreover, I had not half tested her powers of speaking English; all I had drawn from her in that language were the words 'Yes,' and 'Thank you, sir.' 'No matter,' I reflected. 'What has been left incomplete now, shall be finished another day.' Nor did I fail to keep the promise thus made to myself. It was difficult to get even a few words of particular conversation with one pupil among so many; but, according to the old proverb, 'Where there is a will, there is a way'; and again and again I managed to find an opportunity for exchanging a few words with Mdlle. Henri, regardless that envy stared and detraction whispered whenever I approached her.

'Your book an instant.' Such was the mode in which I often began these brief dialogues; the time was always just at the conclusion of the lesson; and motioning to her to rise, I installed myself in her place, allowing her to stand deferentially at my side; for I esteemed it wise and right in her case to enforce strictly all forms ordinarily in use between master and pupil; the rather because I perceived that in proportion as my manner grew austere and magisterial, hers became easy and self-possessed—an odd contradiction, doubtless, to the ordinary effect in such cases; but so it was.

'A pencil,' said I, holding out my hand without looking at her. (I am now about to sketch a brief report of the first of these conferences.) She gave me one, and while I underlined some errors in a grammatical exercise she had written, I observed—'You are not a native of Belgium?'

'No.'

'Nor of France?'

'No.'

'Where, then, is your birthplace?'

'I was born at Geneva.'

'You don't call Frances and Evans Swiss names, I presume?'

'No, sir; they are English names.'

'Just so; and is it the custom of the Genevese to give their children English appellatives?'

'Non, Monsieur; mais——'

'Speak English, if you please.'

'Mais——'

'English——'

'But' (slowly and with embarrassment) 'my parents were not all the two Genevese.'

'Say *both*, instead of "all the two," Mademoiselle.'

'Not *both* Swiss: my mother was English.'

'Ah! and of English extraction?'

'Yes—her ancestors were all English.'

'And your father?'

'He was Swiss.'

'What besides? What was his profession?'

'Ecclesiastic—pastor—he had a church.'

'Since your mother is an Englishwoman, why do you not speak English with more facility?'

'Maman est morte il y a dix ans.'

'And you do homage to her memory by forgetting her language. Have the goodness to put French out of your mind so long as I converse with you—keep to English.'

'C'est si difficile, Monsieur, quand on n'en a plus l'habitude.'

'You had the habitude formerly, I suppose? Now answer me in your mother tongue.'

'Yes, sir, I spoke the English more than the French when I was a child.'

'Why do you not speak it now?'

'Because I have no English friends.'

'You live with your father, I suppose?'

'My father is dead.'

'You have brothers and sisters?'

'Not one.'

'Do you live alone?'

'No—I have an aunt—ma tante Julienne.'

'Your father's sister?'

'Justement, Monsieur.'

'Is that English?'

'No—but I forget——'

'For which, Mademoiselle, if you were a child I should certainly devise some slight punishment; at your age—you must be two or three and twenty, I should think?'

'Pas encore, Monsieur—en un mois j'aurai dix-neuf ans.'

'Well, nineteen is a mature age, and, having attained it, you ought to be so solicitous for your own improvement, that it should not be needful for a master to remind you twice of the expediency of your speaking English whenever practicable.'

To this wise speech I received no answer; and, when I looked up, my pupil was smiling to herself a much-meaning, though not very gay smile; it seemed to say, 'He talks of he knows not what:' it said this so plainly that I determined to request information on the point concerning which my ignorance seemed to be thus tacitly affirmed.

'Are you solicitous for your own improvement?'

'Rather.'

'How do you prove it, Mademoiselle?'

An odd question, and bluntly put; it excited a second smile.

'Why, Monsieur, I am not inattentive—am I? I learn my lessons well——'

'Oh, a child can do that! And what more do you do?'

'What more can I do?'

'Oh, certainly, not much; but you are a teacher, are you not, as well as a pupil?'

'Yes.'

'You teach lace-mending?'

'Yes.'

'A dull, stupid occupation; do you like it?'

'No—it is tedious.'

'Why do you pursue it? Why do you not rather teach history, geography, grammar, even arithmetic?'

'Is Monsieur certain that I am myself thoroughly acquainted with these studies?'

'I don't know; you ought to be at your age.'

'But I never was at school, Monsieur——'

'Indeed! What then were your friends—what was your aunt about? She is very much to blame.'

'No, Monsieur, no—my aunt is good—she is not to blame—she does what she can; she lodges and nourishes me' (I report Mdlle. Henri's phrases literally, and it was thus she translated from the French). 'She is not rich; she has only an annuity of twelve hundred francs, and it would be impossible for her to send me to school.'

'Rather,' thought I to myself on hearing this, but I continued, in the dogmatical tone I had adopted:—'It is sad, however, that you should be brought up in ignorance of the most ordinary branches of education; had you known something of history and grammar you might, by degrees, have relinquished your lace-mending drudgery, and risen in the world.'

'It is what I mean to do.'

'How? By a knowledge of English alone? That will not suffice; no respectable family will receive a governess whose whole stock of knowledge consists in a familiarity with one foreign language.'

'Monsieur, I know other things.'

'Yes, yes, you can work with Berlin wools, and embroider handkerchiefs and collars—that will do little for you.'

Mdlle. Henri's lips were unclosed to answer, but she checked herself, as thinking the discussion had been sufficiently pursued, and remained silent.

'Speak,' I continued, impatiently; 'I never like the appearance of acquiescence when the reality is not there; and you had a contradiction at your tongue's end.'

'Monsieur, I have had many lessons both in grammar, history, geography, and arithmetic. I have gone through a course of each study.'

'Bravo! but how did you manage it, since your aunt could not afford to send you to school?'

'By lace-mending; by the thing Monsieur despises so much.'

'Truly! And now, Mademoiselle, it will be a good exercise for you to explain to me in English how such a result was produced by such means.'

'Monsieur, I begged my aunt to have me taught lace-mending soon after we came to Brussels, because I knew it was a métier, a trade which was easily learnt, and by which I could earn some money very soon. I learnt it in a few days, and I quickly got work, for all the Brussels ladies have old lace—very precious—which must be mended all the times it is washed. I earned money a little, and this money I gave for lessons in the studies I have mentioned; some of it I spent in buying books, English books especially; soon I shall try to find a place of governess, or school-teacher, when I can write and speak English well; but it will be difficult, because those who know I have been a lace-mender will despise me, as the pupils here despise me. Pourtant j'ai mon projet,' she added in a lower tone.

'What is it?'

'I will go and live in England; I will teach French there.'

The words were pronounced emphatically. She said

'England' as you might suppose an Israelite of Moses' days would have said Canaan.

'Have you a wish to see England?'

'Yes, and an intention.'

And here a voice, the voice of the directress, interposed:—

'Mademoiselle Henri, je crois qu'il va pleuvoir; vous feriez bien, ma bonne amie, de retourner chez vous tout de suite.'

In silence, without a word of thanks for this officious warning, Mdlle. Henri collected her books; she moved to me respectfully, endeavoured to move to her superior, though the endeavour was almost a failure, for her head seemed as if it would not bend, and thus departed.

Where there is one grain of perseverance or wilfulness in the composition, trifling obstacles are ever known rather to stimulate than discourage. Mdlle. Reuter might as well have spared herself the trouble of giving that intimation about the weather (by-the-by her prediction was falsified by the event—it did not rain that evening). At the close of the next lesson I was again at Mdlle. Henri's desk. Thus did I accost her:—'What is your idea of England, Mademoiselle? Why do you wish to go there?'

Accustomed by this time to the calculated abruptness of my manner, it no longer discomposed or surprised her, and she answered with only so much of hesitation as was rendered inevitable by the difficulty she experienced in improvising the translation of her thoughts from French to English—

'England is something unique, as I have heard and read; my idea of it is vague, and I want to go there to render my idea clear, definite.'

'Hum! How much of England do you suppose you could see if you went there in the capacity of a teacher? A strange notion you must have of getting a clear and definite idea of a country! All you could see of Great Britain would be the interior of a school, or at most of one or two private dwellings.'

'It would be an English school; they would be English dwellings.'

'Indisputably; but what then? What would be the value of observations made on a scale so narrow?'

'Monsieur, might not one learn something by analogy? An—échantillon—a—a sample often serves to give an idea of the whole; besides, narrow and wide are words comparative, are they not? All my life would perhaps seem narrow in your eyes—all the life of a—that little animal subterranean—une taupe—comment dit-on?'

'Mole.'

'Yes—a mole, which lives underground, would seem narrow even to me.'

'Well, Mademoiselle—what then? Proceed.'

'Mais, Monsieur, vous me comprenez.'

'Not in the least; have the goodness to explain.'

'Why, Monsieur, it is just so. In Switzerland I have done but little, learnt but little, and seen but little; my life there was in a circle; I walked the same round every day; I could not get out of it; had I rested—remained there even till my death, I should never have enlarged it, because I am poor and not skilful, I have not great acquirements; when I was quite tired of this round, I begged my aunt to go to Brussels; my existence is no larger here, because I am no richer or higher; I walk in as narrow a limit, but the scene is changed; it would change again if I went to England. I knew something of the bourgeois of Geneva, now I know something of the bourgeois of Brussels; if I went to London, I should know something of the bourgeois of London. Can you make any sense out of what I say, Monsieur, or is it all obscure?'

'I see, I see—now let us advert to another subject; you propose to devote your life to teaching, and you are a most unsuccessful teacher; you cannot keep your pupils in order.

A flush of painful confusion was the result of this harsh remark; she bent her head to the desk, but soon raising it replied—'Monsieur, I am not a skilful teacher, it is true, but practice improves; besides, I work under difficulties; here I only teach sewing, I can show no power in sewing, no superiority—it is a subordinate art; then I have no associates in this house, I am isolated; I am too a heretic, which deprives me of influence.'

'And in England you would be a foreigner; that too would deprive you of influence, and would effectually separate you from all round you; in England you would have as few connections, as little importance as you have here.'

'But I should be learning something; for the rest, there are probably difficulties for such as I everywhere, and if I must contend, and perhaps be conquered, I would rather submit to English pride than to Flemish coarseness; besides, Monsieur——'

She stopped—not evidently from any difficulty in finding words to express herself, but because discretion seemed to say, 'You have said enough.'

'Finish your phrase,' I urged.

'Besides, Monsieur, I long to live once more among Protestants; they are more honest than Catholics; a Romish school is a building with porous walls, a hollow floor, a false ceiling; every room in this house, Monsieur, has eye-holes and ear-holes, and what the house is, the inhabitants are, very treacherous; they all think it lawful to tell lies; they all call it politeness to profess friendship where they feel hatred.'

'All?' said I; 'you mean the pupils—the mere children—inexperienced, giddy things, who have not learnt to distinguish the difference between right and wrong?'

'On the contrary, Monsieur—the children are the most sincere; they have not yet had time to become accomplished in duplicity; they will tell lies, but they do it inartificially, and you know they are lying; but the grown-up people are very false; they deceive strangers, they deceive each other——'

A servant here entered.

'Mdlle. Henri—Mdlle. Reuter vous prie de vouloir bien conduire la petite de Dorlodot chez elle: elle vous attend dans le cabinet de Rosalie la portière—c'est que sa bonne n'est pas venue la chercher—voyez-vous?'

'Eh bien! est-ce que je suis sa bonne—moi?' demanded Mdlle. Henri; then smiling, with that same bitter, derisive smile I had seen on her lips once before, she hastily rose and made her exit.

CHAPTER XVIII

The young Anglo-Swiss evidently derived both pleasure and profit from the study of her mother-tongue. In teaching her I did not, of course, confine myself to the ordinary school routine; I made instruction in English a channel for instruction in literature. I prescribed to her a course of reading; she had a little selection of English classics, a few of which had been left her by her mother, and the others she had purchased with her own penny-fee. I lent her some more modern works; all these she read with avidity, giving me, in writing, a clear summary of each work when she had perused it. Composition, too, she delighted in. Such occupation seemed the very breath of her nostrils, and soon her improved productions wrung from me the avowal that those qualities in her I had termed taste and fancy ought rather to have been denominated judgment and imagination. When I intimated so much, which I did as usual in dry and stinted phrase, I looked for the radiant and exulting smile my one word of eulogy had elicited before; but Frances coloured. If she did smile, it was very softly and shyly; and instead of looking up to me with a conquering glance, her eyes rested on my hand, which, stretched over her shoulder, was writing some directions with a pencil on the margin of her book.

'Well, are you pleased that I am satisfied with your progress?' I asked.

'Yes,' said she slowly, gently, the blush that had half subsided returning.

'But I do not say enough, I suppose?' I continued. 'My praises are too cool?'

She made no answer, and, I thought, looked a little sad. I divined her thoughts, and should much have liked to have responded to them, had it been expedient so to do. She was not now very ambitious of my admiration—not eagerly desirous of dazzling me; a little affection—ever so little—pleased her better than all the panegyrics in the world. Feeling this, I stood a good while behind her, writing on the margin of her book. I could hardly quit my station or relinquish my occupation; something retained me bending there, my head very near hers, and my hand near hers too; but the margin of a copy-book is not an illimitable space—so, doubtless, the directress thought; and she took occasion to walk past in order to ascertain by what art I prolonged so disproportionately the period necessary for filling it. I was obliged to go. Distasteful effort—to leave what we most prefer!

Frances did not become pale or feeble in consequence of her sedentary employment; perhaps the stimulus it communicated to her mind counterbalanced the inaction it imposed on her body. She changed, indeed, changed obviously and rapidly; but it was for the better. When I first saw her, her countenance was sunless, her complexion colourless; she looked like one who had no source of enjoyment, no store of bliss anywhere in the world; now the cloud had passed from her mien, leaving space for the dawn of hope and interest, and those feelings rose like a clear morning, animating what had been depressed, tinting what had been pale. Her eyes, whose colour I had not at first known, so dim were they with repressed tears, so shadowed with ceaseless dejection, now, lit by a ray of the sunshine that cheered her heart, revealed irids of bright hazel—irids large and full, screened with long lashes; and pupils instinct with fire. That look of wan emaciation which anxiety or low spirits often communicates to a thoughtful, thin face, rather long than round, having vanished from hers, a clearness of skin almost bloom, and a plumpness almost embonpoint, softened the decided lines of her features. Her figure shared in this beneficial change; it became rounder, and as the harmony of her form was complete and her stature of the graceful middle height, one did not regret (or at least *I* did not regret) the absence of confirmed fulness, in contours, still slight, though compact, elegant, flexible—the exquisite turning of waist, wrist, hand, foot, and ankle satisfied completely my notions of symmetry, and allowed a lightness and freedom of movement which corresponded with my ideas of grace.

Thus improved, thus wakened to life, Mdlle. Henri began to take a new footing in the school; her mental power, manifested gradually but steadily, ere long extorted recognition even from the envious; and when the young and healthy saw that she could smile brightly, converse gaily, move with vivacity and alertness, they acknowledged in her a sisterhood of youth and health, and tolerated her as of their kind accordingly.

To speak truth, I watched this change much as a gardener watches the growth of a precious plant, and I contributed to it too, even as the said gardener contributes to the development of his favourite. To me it was not difficult to discover how I could best foster my pupil, cherish her starved feelings, and induce the outward manifestation of that inward vigour which sunless drought and blighting blast had hitherto forbidden to expand. Constancy of attention—a kindness as mute as watchful, always standing by her, cloaked in the rough garb of austerity, and making its real nature known only by a rare glance of interest, or a cordial and gentle word; real respect masked with seeming imperiousness, directing, urging her actions, yet helping her too, and that with devoted care: these were the means I used, for these means best suited Frances' feelings, as susceptible as deep vibrating—her nature at once proud and shy.

The benefits of my system became apparent also in her altered demeanour as a teacher; she now took her place amongst her pupils with an air of spirit and firmness which assured them at once that she meant to be obeyed—and obeyed she was. They felt they had lost their power over her. If any girl had rebelled, she would no longer have taken her rebellion to heart; she possessed a source of comfort they could not drain, a pillar of support they could not overthrow: formerly, when insulted, she wept; now, she smiled.

The public reading of one of her devoirs achieved the revelation of her talents to all and sundry; I remember the subject—it was an emigrant's letter to his friends at home. It opened with simplicity; some natural and graphic touches disclosed to the reader the scene of virgin forest and great New-World river—barren of sail and flag—amidst which the epistle was supposed to be indited. The difficulties and dangers that attend a settler's life were hinted at; and in the few words said on that subject, Mdlle. Henri failed not to render audible the voice of resolve, patience, endeavour. The disasters which had driven him from his native country were alluded to; stainless honour, inflexible independence, indestructible self-respect there took the word. Past days were spoken of; the grief of parting, the regrets of absence, were touched upon; feeling, forcible and fine, breathed eloquent in every period. At the close, consolation was suggested; religious faith became there the speaker, and she spoke well.

The devoir was powerfully written, in language at once chaste and choice, in a style nerved with vigour and graced with harmony.

Mdlle. Reuter was quite sufficiently acquainted with English to understand it when read or spoken in her presence, though she could neither speak nor write it herself. During the perusal of this devoir she sat placidly busy, her eyes and fingers occupied with the formation of a 'rivière,' or open-work hem round a cambric handkerchief; she said nothing, and her face and forehead, clothed with a mask of purely negative expression, were as blank of comment as her lips. As neither surprise, pleasure, approbation, nor interest were evinced in her countenance, so no more were disdain, envy, annoyance, weariness; if that inscrutable mien said anything, it was simply this—'The matter is too trite to excite an emotion, or call forth an opinion.'

As soon as I had done, a hum rose; several of the pupils, pressing round Mdlle. Henri, began to beset her with compliments; the composed voice of the directress was now heard:—'Young ladies, such of you as have cloaks and umbrellas will hasten to return home before the shower becomes heavier' (it was raining a little), 'the remainder will wait till their respective servants arrive to fetch them.' And the school dispersed, for it was four o'clock.

'Monsieur, a word,' said Mdlle. Reuter, stepping on to the estrade, and signifying, by a movement of the hand, that she wished me to relinquish, for an instant, the castor I had clutched.

'Mademoiselle, I am at your service.'

'Monsieur, it is of course an excellent plan to encourage effort in young people by making conspicuous the progress of any particularly industrious pupil; but do you not think that in the present instance, Mdlle. Henri can hardly be considered as a concurrent with the other pupils? She is older than most of them, and has had advantages of an exclusive nature for acquiring a knowledge of English; on the other hand, her sphere of life is somewhat beneath theirs; under these circumstances, a public distinction, conferred upon Mdlle. Henri, may be the means of suggesting comparisons, and exciting feelings such as would be far from advantageous to the individual forming their object. The interest I take in Mdlle. Henri's real welfare makes me desirous of screening her from annoyances of this sort; besides, Monsieur, as I have before hinted to you, the sentiment of *amour propre* has a somewhat marked preponderance in her character; celebrity has a tendency to foster this sentiment, and in her it should be rather repressed—she rather needs keeping down than bringing forward; and then I think, Monsieur—it appears to me that ambition, *literary* ambition especially, is not a feeling to be cherished in the mind of a woman: would not Mdlle. Henri be much safer and happier if taught to believe that in the quiet discharge of social duties consists her real vocation, than if stimulated to aspire after applause and publicity? She may never marry; scanty as are her resources, obscure as are her connections, uncertain as is her health (for I think her consumptive, her mother died of that complaint), it is more than probable she never will: I do not see how she can rise to a position whence such a step would be possible; but even in celibacy it would be better for her to retain the character and habits of a respectable decorous female.'

'Indisputably, Mademoiselle,' was my answer. 'Your opinion admits of no doubt;' and fearful of the harangue being renewed, I retreated under cover of that cordial sentence of assent.

At the date of a fortnight after the little incident noted above, I find it recorded in my diary that a hiatus occurred in Mdlle. Henri's usually regular attendance in class. The first day or two I wondered at her absence, but did not like to ask an explanation of it; I thought indeed some chance word might be dropped which would afford me the information I wished to obtain, without my running the risk of exciting silly smiles and gossiping whispers by demanding it. But when a week passed and the seat at the desk near the door still remained vacant, and when no allusion was made to the circumstance by any individual of the class—when, on the contrary, I found that all observed a marked silence on the point—I determined, *coûte que coûte*, to break the ice of this silly reserve. I selected Sylvie as my informant, because from her I knew that I should at least get a sensible answer, unaccompanied by wriggle, titter, or other flourish of folly.

'Où donc est Mdlle. Henri?' I said one day as I returned an exercise-book I had been examining.

'Elle est partie, Monsieur.'

'Partie! et pour combien de temps? Quand reviendra-t-elle?'

'Elle est partie pour toujours, Monsieur; elle ne reviendra plus.'

'Ah!' was my involuntary exclamation; then after a pause: 'En êtes-vous bien sûre, Sylvie?'

'Oui, oui, Monsieur, Mademoiselle la directrice nous l'a dit elle-même il y a deux ou trois jours.'

And I could pursue my inquiries no further; time, place, and circumstances forbade my adding another word. I could neither comment on what had been said, nor demand further particulars. A question as to the reason of the teacher's departure, as to whether it had been voluntary or otherwise, was indeed on my lips, but I suppressed it—there were listeners all round. An hour after, in passing Sylvie in the corridor as she was putting on her bonnet, I stopped short and asked: 'Sylvie, do you know Mdlle. Henri's address? I have some books of hers,' I added carelessly, 'and I should wish to send them to her.'

'No, Monsieur,' replied Sylvie; 'but perhaps Rosalie, the portress, will be able to give it to you.'

Rosalie's cabinet was just at hand; I stepped in and repeated the inquiry. Rosalie—a smart French grisette—looked up from her work with a knowing smile, precisely the sort of smile I had been so desirous to avoid exciting. Her answer was prepared; she knew nothing whatever of Mdlle. Henri's address—had never known it. Turning from her with impatience—for I believed she lied and was hired to lie—I almost knocked down someone who had been standing at my back; it was the directress. My abrupt movement made her recoil two or three steps. I was obliged to apologise, which I did more concisely than politely. No man likes to be dogged, and in the very irritable mood in which I then was the sight of Mdlle. Reuter thoroughly incensed me. At the moment I turned her countenance looked hard, dark, and inquisitive; her eyes were bent upon me with an expression of almost hungry curiosity. I had scarcely caught this phase of physiognomy ere it had vanished; a bland smile played on her features; my harsh apology was received with good-humoured facility.

'Oh, don't mention it, Monsieur; you only touched my hair with your elbow; it is no worse, only a little dishevelled.' She shook it back, and passing her fingers through her curls, loosened them into more numerous and flowing ringlets. Then she went on with vivacity: 'Rosalie, I was coming to tell you to go instantly and close the windows of the salon; the wind is rising, and the muslin curtains will be covered with dust.'

Rosalie departed. 'Now,' thought I, 'this will not do; Mdlle. Reuter thinks her meanness in eavesdropping is screened by her art in devising a pretext, whereas the muslin curtains she speaks of are not more transparent than this same pretext.' An impulse came over me to thrust the flimsy screen aside, and confront her craft boldly with a word or two of plain truth. 'The rough-shod foot treads most firmly on slippery ground,' thought I; so I began: 'Mdlle. Henri has left your establishment—been dismissed, I presume?'

'Ah, I wished to have a little conversation with you, Monsieur,' replied the directress with the most natural and affable air in the world; 'but we cannot talk quietly here; will Monsieur step into the garden a minute?' And she preceded me, stepping out through the glass door I have before mentioned.

'There,' said she, when we had reached the centre of the middle alley, and when the foliage of shrubs and trees, now in their summer pride, closing behind and around us, shut out the view of the house, and thus imparted a sense of seclusion even to this little plot of ground in the very core of a capital.

'There, one feels quiet and free when there are only pear-trees and rose-bushes about one; I daresay you, like me, Monsieur, are sometimes tired of being eternally in the midst of life; of having human faces always round you, human eyes always upon you, human voices always in your ear. I am sure I often wish intensely for liberty to spend a whole month in the country at some little farmhouse, bien gentille, bien propre, tout entourée de champs et de bois; quelle vie charmante que la vie champêtre! N'est-ce pas, Monsieur?'

'Cela dépend, Mademoiselle.'

'Que le vent est bon et frais!' continued the directress; and she was right there, for it was a south wind, soft and sweet. I carried my hat in my hand, and this gentle breeze, passing through my hair, soothed my temples like balm. Its refreshing effect, however, penetrated no deeper than the mere surface of the frame; for as I walked by the side of Mdlle. Reuter, my heart was still hot within me, and while I was musing the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue: 'I understand Mdlle. Henri is gone from hence, and will not return?'

'Ah, true! I meant to have named the subject to you some days ago, but my time is so completely taken up, I cannot do half the things I wish: have you never experienced what it is, Monsieur, to find the day too short by twelve hours for your numerous duties?'

'Not often. Mdlle. Henri's departure was not voluntary, I presume? If it had been, she would certainly have given me some intimation of it, being my pupil.'

'Oh, did she not tell you? That was strange; for my part, I never thought of adverting to the subject; when one has so many things to attend to, one is apt to forget little incidents that are not of primary importance.'

'You consider Mdlle. Henri's dismission, then, as a very insignificant event?'

'Dismission? Ah! she was not dismissed; I can say with truth, Monsieur, that since I became the head of this establishment no master or teacher has ever been *dismissed* from it.'

'Yet some have left it, Mademoiselle?'

'Many; I have found it necessary to change frequently

—a change of instructors is often beneficial to the interests of a school; it gives life and variety to the proceedings; it amuses the pupils, and suggests to the parents the idea of exertion and progress.'

'Yet when you are tired of a professor or maîtresse, you scruple to dismiss them?'

'No need to have recourse to such extreme measures, I assure you. Allons, Monsieur le professeur—asseyons-nous; je vais vous donner une petite leçon dans votre état d'instituteur.' (I wish I might write all she said to me in French—it loses sadly by being translated into English.) We had now reached the garden-chair; the directress sat down, and signed to me to sit by her, but I only rested my knee on the seat, and stood leaning my head and arm against the embowering branch of a huge laburnum, whose golden flowers, blent with the dusky green leaves of a lilac-bush, formed a mixed arch of shade and sunshine over the retreat. Mdlle. Reuter sat silent a moment; some novel movements were evidently working in her mind, and they showed their nature on her astute brow; she was meditating some *chef-d'œuvre* of policy. Convinced by several months' experience that the affectation of virtues she did not possess was unavailing to ensnare me—aware that I had read her real nature, and would believe nothing of the character she gave out as being hers—she had determined, at last, to try a new key, and see if the lock of my heart would yield to that; a little audacity, a word of truth, a glimpse of the real. 'Yes, I will try,' was her inward resolve; and then her blue eye glittered upon me—it did not flash—nothing of flame ever kindled in its temperate gleam.

'Monsieur fears to sit by me?' she inquired playfully.

'I have no wish to usurp Pelet's place,' I answered, for I had got the habit of speaking to her bluntly—a habit begun in anger, but continued because I saw that, instead of offending, it fascinated her. She cast down her eyes, and drooped her eyelids; she sighed uneasily; she turned with an anxious gesture, as if she would give me the idea of a bird that flutters in its cage, and would fain fly from its jail and jailer, and seek its natural mate and pleasant nest.

'Well—and your lesson?' I demanded briefly.

'Ah!' she exclaimed, recovering herself, 'you are so young, so frank and fearless, so talented, so impatient of imbecility, so disdainful of vulgarity, you need a lesson; here it is then: far more is to be done in this world by dexterity than by strength; but, perhaps, you knew that before, for there is delicacy as well as power in your character—policy, as well as pride?'

'Go on,' said I; and I could hardly help smiling, the flattery was so piquant, so finely seasoned. She caught the prohibited smile, though I passed my hand over my mouth to conceal it; and again she made room for me to sit beside her. I shook my head, though temptation penetrated to my senses at the moment, and once more I told her to go on.

'Well, then, if ever you are at the head of a large establishment, dismiss nobody. To speak truth, Monsieur (and to you I will speak truth), I despise people who are always making rows, blustering, sending off one to the right, and another to the left, urging and hurrying circumstances. I'll tell you what I like best to do, Monsieur, shall I?' She looked up again; she had compounded her glance well this time—much archness, more deference, a spicy dash of coquetry, an unveiled consciousness of capacity. I nodded; she treated me like the great Mogul; so I became the great Mogul as far as she was concerned.

'I like, Monsieur, to take my knitting in my hands, and to sit quietly down in my chair; circumstances defile past me; I watch their march; so long as they follow the course I wish, I say nothing, and do nothing; I don't clap my hands, and cry out "Bravo! How lucky I am!" to attract the attention and envy of my neighbours—I am merely passive; but when events fall out ill—when circumstances become adverse—I watch very vigilantly; I knit on still, and still I hold my tongue; but every now and then, Monsieur, I just put my toe out—so—and give the rebellious circumstance a little secret push, without noise, which sends it the way I wish, and I am successful after all, and nobody has seen my expedient. So, when teachers or masters become troublesome and inefficient—when, in short, the interests of the school would suffer from their retaining their places—I mind my knitting, events progress, circumstances glide past; I see one which, if pushed ever so little awry, will render untenable the post I wish to have vacated—the deed is done—the stumbling-block removed—and no one saw me: I have not made an enemy, I am rid of an encumbrance.'

A moment since, and I thought her alluring; this speech concluded, I looked on her with distaste.

'Just like you,' was my cold answer. 'And in this way you have ousted Mdlle. Henri? You wanted her office, therefore you rendered it intolerable to her?'

'Not at all, Monsieur, I was merely anxious about Mdlle. Henri's health; no, your moral sight is clear and piercing, but there you have failed to discover the truth. I took—I have always taken a real interest in Mdlle. Henri's welfare; I did not like her going out in all weathers; I thought it would be more advantageous for her to obtain a permanent situation; besides, I considered her now qualified to do something more than teach sewing. I reasoned with her; left the decision to herself; she saw the correctness of my views, and adopted them.'

'Excellent! and now, Mademoiselle, you will have the goodness to give me her address.'

'Her address!' and a sombre and stony change came over the mien of the directress. 'Her address? Ah!—well—I wish I could oblige you, Monsieur, but I cannot, and I will tell you why; whenever I myself asked her for her address, she always evaded the inquiry. I thought—I may be wrong—but I *thought* her motive for doing so was a natural, though mistaken reluctance to introduce me to some, probably, very poor abode; her means were narrow, her origin obscure; she lives somewhere, doubtless, in the "Basse Ville."'

'I'll not lose sight of my best pupil yet,' said I, 'though she were born of beggars and lodged in a cellar; for the rest, it is absurd to make a bugbear of her origin to me—I happen to know that she was a Swiss pastor's daughter, neither more nor less; and, as to her narrow means, I care nothing for the poverty of her purse so long as her heart overflows with affluence.'

'Your sentiments are perfectly noble, Monsieur,' said the directress, affecting to suppress a yawn; her sprightliness was now extinct, her temporary candour shut up; the little, red-coloured, piratical-looking pennon of audacity she had allowed to float a minute in the air, was furled, and the broad, sober-hued flag of dissimulation again hung low over the citadel. I did not like her thus, so I cut short the *tête-à-tête* and departed.

CHAPTER XIX

Novelists should never allow themselves to weary of the study of real life. If they observed this duty conscientiously, they would give us fewer pictures chequered with vivid contrasts of light and shade; they would seldom elevate their heroes and heroines to the heights of rapture—still seldomer sink them to the depths of despair; for if we rarely taste the fulness of joy in this life, we yet more rarely savour the acrid bitterness of hopeless anguish; unless, indeed, we have plunged like beasts into sensual indulgence, abused, strained, stimulated, again overstrained, and, at last, destroyed our faculties for enjoyment; then, truly, we may find ourselves without support, robbed of hope. Our agony is great, and how can it end? We have broken the spring of our powers; life must be all suffering—too feeble to conceive faith—death must be darkness—God, spirits, religion can have no place in our collapsed minds, where linger only hideous and polluting recollections of vice; and time brings us on to the brink of the grave, and dissolution flings us in—a rag eaten through and through with disease, wrung together with pain, stamped into the churchyard sod by the inexorable heel of despair.

But the man of regular life and rational mind never despairs. He loses his property—it is a blow—he staggers a moment; then, his energies, roused by the smart, are at work to seek a remedy; activity soon mitigates regret. Sickness affects him; he takes patience—endures what he cannot cure. Acute pain racks him; his writhing limbs know not where to find rest; he leans on Hope's anchors. Death takes from him what he loves; roots up, and tears violently away the stem round which his affections were twined—a dark, dismal time, a frightful wrench—but some morning Religion looks into his desolate house with sunrise, and says, that in another world, another life, he shall meet his kindred again. She speaks of that world as a place unsullied by sin—of that life, as an era unembittered by suffering; she mightily strengthens her consolation by connecting with it two ideas—which mortals cannot comprehend, but on which they love to repose—Eternity, Immortality; and the mind of the mourner, being filled with an image, faint yet glorious, of heavenly hills all light and peace—of a spirit resting there in bliss—of a day when his spirit shall also alight there, free and disembodied—of a reunion perfected by love, purified from fear—he takes courage—goes out to encounter the necessities and discharge the duties of life; and, though sadness may never lift her burden from his mind, Hope will enable him to support it.

Well—and what suggested all this? and what is the inference to be drawn therefrom? What suggested it, is the circumstance of my best pupil—my treasure—being snatched from my hands, and put away out of my reach; the inference to be drawn from it is—that, being a steady, reasonable man, I did not allow the resentment, disappointment, and grief, engendered in my mind by this evil chance, to grow there to any monstrous size; nor did I allow them to monopolize the whole space of my heart; I pent them, on the contrary, in one strait and secret nook. In the daytime, too, when I was about my duties, I put them on the silent system; and it was only after I had closed the door of my chamber at night that I somewhat relaxed my severity towards these morose nurslings, and allowed vent to their language of murmurs; then, in revenge, they sat on my pillow, haunted my bed, and kept me awake with their long midnight cry.

A week passed. I had said nothing more to Mdlle. Reuter. I had been calm in my demeanour to her, though stony cold and hard. When I looked at her, it was with the glance fitting to be bestowed on one who I knew had consulted jealousy as an adviser, and employed treachery as an instrument—the glance of quiet disdain and rooted distrust. On Saturday evening, ere I left the house, I stept into the *salle à manger*, where she was sitting alone, and, placing myself before her, I asked, with the same tranquil tone and manner that I should have used had I put the question for the first time—'Mademoiselle, will you have the goodness to give me the address of Frances Evans Henri?'

A little surprised, but not disconcerted, she smilingly disclaimed any knowledge of that address, adding, 'Monsieur has perhaps forgotten that I explained all about that circumstance before—a week ago?'

'Mademoiselle,' I continued, 'you would greatly oblige me by directing me to that young person's abode.'

She seemed somewhat puzzled; and, at last, looking up with an admirably counterfeited air of naïveté, she demanded, 'Does Monsieur think I am telling an untruth?'

Still avoiding to give her a direct answer, I said, 'It is not then your intention, Mademoiselle, to oblige me in this particular?'

'But, Monsieur, how can I tell you what I do not know?'

'Very well; I understand you perfectly, Mademoiselle; and now I have only two or three words to say. This is the last week in July; in another month the vacation will commence; have the goodness to avail yourself of the leisure it will afford you to look out for another English master—at the close of August I shall be under the necessity of resigning my post in your establishment.'

I did not wait for her comments on this announcement, but bowed and immediately withdrew.

That same evening, soon after dinner, a servant brought me a small packet; it was directed in a hand I knew, but had not hoped so soon to see again; being in my own apartment and alone, there was nothing to prevent my immediately opening it; it contained four five-franc pieces, and a note in English.

'MONSIEUR,—

'I CAME to Mdlle. Reuter's house yesterday, at the time when I knew you would be just about finishing your lesson, and I asked if I might go into the schoolroom and speak to you. Mdlle. Reuter came out and said you were already gone; it had not yet struck four, so I thought she must be mistaken, but concluded it would be vain to call another day on the same errand. In one sense a note will do as well—it will wrap up the 20 francs, the price of the lessons I have received from you; and if it will not fully express the thanks I owe you in addition—if it will not bid you good-by as I could wish to have done—if it will not tell you, as I long to do, how sorry I am that I shall probably never see you more—why, spoken words would hardly be more adequate to the task. Had I seen you, I should probably have stammered out something feeble and unsatisfactory—something belying my feelings rather than explaining them; so it is perhaps as well that I was denied admission to your presence. You often remarked, Monsieur, that my devoirs dwelt a great deal on fortitude in bearing grief—you said I introduced that theme too often: I find indeed that it is much easier to write about a severe duty than to perform it, for I am oppressed when I see and feel to what a reverse fate has condemned me; you were kind to me, Monsieur—very kind; I am afflicted—I am heart-broken to be quite separated from you; soon I shall have no friend on earth. But it is useless troubling you with my distresses. What claim have I on your sympathy? None; I will then say no more.

'Farewell, Monsieur,
'F. E. HENRI.'

I put up the note in my pocket-book. I slipped the five-franc pieces into my purse—then I took a turn through my narrow chamber.

'Mdlle. Reuter talked about her poverty,' said I, 'and she is poor; yet she pays her debts and more. I have not yet given her a quarter's lessons, and she has sent me a quarter's due. I wonder of what she deprived herself to scrape together the twenty francs—I wonder what sort of a place she has to live in, and what sort of a woman her aunt is, and whether she is likely to get employment to supply the place she has lost. No doubt she will have to trudge about long enough from school to school, to inquire here, and apply there—be rejected in this place, disappointed in that. Many an evening she'll go to her bed tired and unsuccessful. And the directress would not let her in to bid me good-by? I might not have the chance of standing with her for a few minutes at a window in the schoolroom and exchanging some half-dozen of sentences—getting to know where she lived—putting matters in train for having all things arranged to my mind? No address on the note'—I continued, drawing it again from the pocket-book and examining it on each side of the two leaves: 'women are women, that is certain, and always do business like women; men mechanically put a date and address to their communications. And these five-franc pieces?'—(I hauled them forth from my purse)—'if she had offered me them herself instead of tying them up with a thread of green silk in a kind of Liliputian packet, I could have thrust them back into her little hand, and shut up the small, taper fingers over them—so—and compelled her shame, her pride, her shyness, all to yield to a little bit of determined Will—now where is she? How can I get at her?'

Opening my chamber door, I walked down into the kitchen.

'Who brought the packet?' I asked of the servant who had delivered it to me.

'Un petit commissionnaire, Monsieur.'

'Did he say anything?'

'Rien.'

And I wended my way up the back-stairs, wondrously the wiser for my inquiries.

'No matter,' said I to myself, as I again closed the door. 'No matter—I'll seek her through Brussels.'

And I did. I sought her day by day whenever I had a moment's leisure, for four weeks; I sought her on Sundays all day long; I sought her on the Boulevards, in the Allée Verte, in the Park; I sought her in St. Gudule and St. Jacques; I sought her in the two Protestant chapels; I attended these latter at the German, French, and English services, not doubting that I should meet her at one of them. All my researches were absolutely fruitless; my security on the last point was proved by the event to be equally groundless with my other calculations. I stood at the door of each chapel after the service, and waited till every individual had come out, scrutinizing every gown draping a slender form, peering under every bonnet covering a young head. In vain; I saw girlish figures pass me, drawing their black scarfs over their sloping shoulders, but none of them had the exact turn and air of Mdlle. Henri's; I saw pale and thoughtful faces 'encadrées' in bands of brown hair, but I never found her forehead, her eyes, her eyebrows. All the features of all the faces I met seemed frittered away, because my eye failed to recognise the peculiarities it was bent upon; an ample space of brow and a large, dark, and serious eye, with a fine but decided line of eyebrow traced above.

'She has probably left Brussels—perhaps is gone to England, as she said she would,' muttered I inwardly, as on the afternoon of the fourth Sunday I turned from the door of the chapel-royal, which the door-keeper had just closed and locked, and followed in the wake of the last of the congregation, now dispersed and dispersing over the square. I had soon outwalked the couples of English gentlemen and ladies. (Gracious goodness! why don't they dress better? My eye is yet filled with visions of the high-flounced, slovenly, and tumbled dresses, in costly silk and satin; of the large unbecoming collars in expensive lace; of the ill-cut coats and strangely-fashioned pantaloons which every Sunday, at the English service, filled the choirs of the chapel-royal, and after it, issuing forth into the square, came into disadvantageous contrast with freshly and trimly attired foreign figures, hastening to attend salut at the church of Coburg.) I had passed these pairs of Britons, and the groups of pretty British children, and the British footmen and waiting-maids; I had crossed the Place Royale, and got into the Rue Royale, thence I had diverged into the Rue de Louvain—an old and quiet street. I remember that, feeling a little hungry, and not desiring to go back and take my share of the 'goûter,' now on the refectory table at Pelet's—to wit, pistolets and water—I stepped into a baker's and refreshed myself on a *couc* (?)—it is a Flemish word, I don't know how to spell it—*à Corinthe—anglicè*, a currant bun—and a cup of coffee; and then I strolled on towards the Porte de Louvain. Very soon I was out of the city, and slowly mounting the hill, which ascends from the gate: I took my time; for the afternoon, though cloudy, was very sultry, and not a breeze stirred to refresh the atmosphere. No inhabitant of Brussels need wander far to search for solitude; let him but move half a league from his own city and he will find her brooding still and blank over the wide fields, so drear though so fertile, spread out treeless and trackless round the capital of Brabant. Having gained the summit of the hill, and having stood and looked long over the cultured but lifeless champaign, I felt a wish to quit the high-road, which I had hitherto followed, and get in among those tilled grounds—fertile as the beds of a Brobdingnagian kitchen-garden—spreading far and wide even to the boundaries of the horizon, where, from a dusk green, distance changed them to a sullen blue, and confused their tints with those of the livid and thunderous-looking sky. Accordingly I turned up a by-path to the right; I had not followed it far ere it brought me, as I expected, into the fields, amidst which, just before me, stretched a long and lofty white wall enclosing, as it seemed from the foliage showing above, some thickly planted nursery of yew and cypress, for of that species were the branches resting on the pale parapets, and crowding gloomily about a massive cross, planted doubtless on a central eminence, and extending its arms, which seemed of black marble, over the summits of those sinister trees. I approached, wondering to what house this well-protected garden appertained. I turned the angle of the wall, thinking to see some stately residence; I was close upon great iron gates; there was a hut serving for a lodge near, but I had no occasion to apply for the key—the gates were open; I pushed one leaf back—rain had rusted its hinges, for it groaned dolefully as they revolved. Thick planting embowered the entrance. Passing up the avenue, I saw objects on each hand, which, in their own mute language of inscription and sign, explained clearly to what abode I had made my way. This was the house appointed for all living; crosses, monuments, and garlands of everlastings announced, 'The Protestant Cemetery, outside the gate of Louvain.'

The place was large enough to afford half-an-hour's strolling without the monotony of treading continually the same path; and, for those who love to peruse the annals of graveyards, here was variety of inscription enough to occupy the attention for double or treble that space of time. Hither people of many kindreds, tongues, and nations had brought their dead for interment; and here, on pages of stone, of marble, and of brass, were written names, dates, last tributes of pomp or love, in English, in French, in German, and Latin. Here the Englishman had erected a marble monument over the remains of his Mary Smith or Jane Brown, and inscribed it only with her name. There the French widower had shaded the grave of his Elmire or Celestine with a brilliant thicket of roses, amidst which a little tablet rising bore an equally bright testimony to her countless virtues. Every nation, tribe, and kindred, mourned after its own fashion; and how soundless was the mourning of all!

My own tread, though slow and upon smooth-rolled paths, seemed to startle, because it formed the sole break to a silence otherwise total. Not only the winds, but the very fitful, wandering airs, were that afternoon, as by common consent, all fallen asleep in their various quarters; the north was hushed, the south silent, the east sobbed not, nor did the west whisper. The clouds in heaven were condensed and dull, but apparently quite motionless. Under the trees of this cemetery nestled a warm breathless gloom, out of which the cypresses stood up straight and mute, above which the willows hung low and still; where the flowers, as languid as fair, waited listless for night dew or thunder-shower; where the tombs, and those they hid, lay impassable to sun or shadow, to rain or drought.

Importuned by the sound of my own footsteps, I turned off upon the turf, and slowly advanced to a grove of yews; I saw something stir among the stems; I thought it might be a broken branch swinging—my short-sighted vision had caught no form, only a sense of motion; but the dusky shade passed on, appearing and disappearing at the openings in the avenue. I soon discerned it was a living thing, and a human thing; and, drawing nearer, I perceived it was a woman, pacing slowly to and fro, and evidently deeming herself alone as I had deemed myself alone, and meditating as I had been meditating. Ere long she returned to a seat which I fancy she had but just quitted, or I should have caught sight of her before. It was in a nook, screened by a clump of trees; there was the white wall before her, and a little stone set up against the wall, and, at the foot of the stone, was an allotment of turf freshly turned up, a new-made grave. I put on my spectacles, and passed softly close behind her; glancing at the inscription on the stone, I read, 'Julienne Henri, died at Brussels, aged sixty. August 10th, 18—.' Having perused the inscription, I looked down at the form sitting bent and thoughtful just under my eyes, unconscious of the vicinity of any living thing; it was a slim, youthful figure in mourning apparel of the plainest black stuff, with a little simple, black crape bonnet; I felt, as well as saw, who it was; and, moving neither hand nor foot, I stood some moments enjoying the security of conviction. I had sought her for a month, and had never discovered one of her traces—never met a hope, or seized a chance of encountering her anywhere. I had been forced to loosen my grasp on expectation; and, but an hour ago, had sunk slackly under the discouraging thought that the current of life, and the impulse of destiny, had swept her for ever from my reach; and, behold, while bending suddenly earthward beneath the pressure of despondency—while following with my eyes the track of sorrow on the turf of a graveyard—here was my lost jewel dropped on the tear-fed herbage, nestling in the mossy and mouldy roots of yew-trees.

Frances sat very quiet, her elbow on her knee, and her head on her hand. I knew she could retain a thinking attitude a long time without change; at last, a tear fell; she had been looking at the name on the stone before her, and her heart had no doubt endured one of those constrictions with which the desolate living, regretting the dead, are, at times, so sorely oppressed. Many tears rolled down, which she wiped away, again and again, with her handkerchief; some distressed sobs escaped her, and then, the paroxysm over, she sat quiet as before. I put my hand gently on her shoulder: no need further to prepare her, for she was neither hysterical nor liable to fainting fits. A sudden push, indeed, might have startled her, but the contact of my quiet touch merely woke attention, as I wished; and, though she turned quickly, yet so lightning-swift is thought, in some minds especially, I believe the wonder of what—the consciousness of who it was that thus stole unawares on her solitude, had passed through her brain, and flashed into her heart, even before she had effected that hasty movement; at least, Amazement had hardly opened her eyes and raised them to mine, ere Recognition informed their irids with most speaking brightness. Nervous surprise had hardly discomposed her features ere a sentiment of most vivid joy shone clear and warm on her whole countenance. I had hardly time to observe that she was wasted and pale, ere called to feel a responsive inward pleasure by the sense of most full and exquisite pleasure glowing in the animated flush, and shining in the expansive light, now diffused over my pupil's face. It was the summer sun flashing out after the heavy summer shower; and what fertilises more rapidly than that beam, burning almost like fire in its ardour?

I hate boldness—that boldness which is of the brassy brow and insensate nerves; but I love the courage of the strong heart, the fervour of the generous blood; I loved with passion the light of Frances Evans' clear hazel eye when it did not fear to look straight into mine; I loved the tones with which she uttered the words—'Mon maître! mon maître!'

I loved the movement with which she confided her hand to my hand; I loved her as she stood there, penniless and parentless; for a sensualist charmless, for me a treasure—my best object of sympathy on earth, thinking such thoughts as I thought, feeling such feelings as I felt; my ideal of the shrine in which to seal my stores of love; personification of discretion and forethought, of diligence and perseverance, of self-denial and self-control—those guardians, those trusty keepers of the gift I longed to confer on her—the gift of all my affections; model of truth and honour, of independence and conscientiousness—those refiners and sustainers of an honest life; silent possessor of a well of tenderness, of a flame, as genial as still, as pure as quenchless, of natural feeling, natural passion—those sources of refreshment and comfort to the sanctuary of home. I knew how quietly and how deeply the well bubbled in her heart; I knew how the more dangerous flame burned safely under the eye of reason; I had seen when the fire shot up a moment high and vivid, when the accelerated heat troubled life's current in its channels; I had seen reason reduce the rebel, and humble its blaze to embers. I had confidence in Frances Evans; I had respect for her, and as I drew her arm through mine, and led her out of the cemetery, I felt I had another sentiment, as strong as confidence, as firm as respect, more fervid than either—that of love.

'Well, my pupil,' said I, as the ominous-sounding gate swung to behind us—'Well, I have found you again: a month's search has seemed long, and I little thought to have discovered my lost sheep straying amongst graves.'

Never had I addressed her but as 'Mademoiselle' before, and to speak thus was to take up a tone new to both her and me. Her answer apprised me that this language ruffled none of her feelings, woke no discord in her heart:—

'Mon maître,' she said, 'have you troubled yourself to seek me? I little imagined you would think much of my absence, but I grieved bitterly to be taken away from you. I was sorry for that circumstance when heavier troubles ought to have made me forget it.'

'Your aunt is dead?'

'Yes, a fortnight since, and she died full of regret, which I could not chase from her mind; she kept repeating, even during the last night of her existence, "Frances, you will be so lonely when I am gone, so friendless:" she wished too that she could have been buried in Switzerland, and it was I who persuaded her in her old age to leave the banks of Lake Leman, and to come, only as it seems to die, in this flat region of Flanders. Willingly would I have observed her last wish, and taken her remains back to our own country, but that was impossible; I was forced to lay her here.'

'She was ill but a short time, I presume?'

'But three weeks. When she began to sink I asked Mdlle. Reuter's leave to stay with her and wait on her; I readily got leave.'

'Do you return to the pensionnat?' I demanded hastily.

'Monsieur, when I had been at home a week Mdlle. Reuter called one evening, just after I had got my aunt to bed; she went into her room to speak to her, and was extremely civil and affable, as she always is; afterwards she came and sat with me a long time, and just as she rose to go away, she said: "Mademoiselle, I shall not soon cease to regret your departure from my establishment, though indeed it is true that you have taught your class of pupils so well that they are all quite accomplished in the little works you manage so skilfully, and have not the slightest need of further instruction; my second teacher must in future supply your place, with regard to the younger pupils, as well as she can, though she is indeed an inferior artiste to you, and doubtless it will be your part now to assume a higher position in your calling; I am sure you will everywhere find schools and families willing to profit by your talents." And then she paid me my last quarter's salary. I asked, as Mademoiselle would no doubt think, very bluntly, if she designed to discharge me from the establishment. She smiled at my inelegance of speech, and answered that "our connection as employer and employed was certainly dissolved, but that she hoped still to retain the pleasure of my acquaintance; she should always be happy to see me as a friend;" and then she said something about the excellent condition of the streets, and the long continuance of fine weather, and went away quite cheerful.'

I laughed inwardly; all this was so like the directress—so like what I had expected and guessed of her conduct; and then the exposure and proof of her lie, unconsciously afforded by Frances:—'She had frequently applied for Mdlle. Henri's address,' forsooth; 'Mdlle. Henri had always evaded giving it,' &c. &c., and here I found her a visitor at the very house of whose locality she had professed absolute ignorance!

Any comments I might have intended to make on my pupil's communication were checked by the plashing of large rain-drops on our faces and on the path, and by the muttering of a distant but coming storm. The warning obvious in stagnant air and leaden sky had already induced me to take the road leading back to Brussels, and now I hastened my own steps and those of my companion, and, as our way lay downhill, we got on rapidly. There was an interval after the fall of the first broad drops before heavy rain came on; in the meantime we had passed through the Porte de Louvain, and were again in the city.

'Where do you live?' I asked; 'I will see you safe home.'

'Rue Notre-Dame aux Neiges,' answered Frances.

It was not far from the Rue de Louvain, and we stood on the doorsteps of the house we sought ere the clouds, severing with loud peal and shattered cataract of lightning, emptied their livid folds in a torrent, heavy, prone, and broad.

'Come in! come in!' said Frances, as, after putting her into the house, I paused ere I followed: the word decided me; I stepped across the threshold, shut the door on the rushing, flashing, whitening storm, and followed her upstairs to her apartments. Neither she nor I were wet; a projection over the door had warded off the straight-descending flood; none but the first large drops had touched our garments; one minute more and we should not have had a dry thread on us.

Stepping over a little mat of green wool, I found myself in a small room with a painted floor and a square of green carpet in the middle; the articles of furniture were few, but all bright and exquisitely clean; order reigned through its narrow limits—such order as it soothed my punctilious soul to behold. And I had hesitated to enter the abode, because I apprehended after all that Mdlle. Reuter's hint about its extreme poverty might be too well founded, and I feared to embarrass the lace-mender by entering her lodgings unawares! Poor the place might be; poor truly it was; but its neatness was better than elegance, and had but a bright little fire shone on that clean hearth, I should have deemed it more attractive than a palace. No fire was there, however, and no fuel laid ready to light; the lace-mender was unable to allow herself that indulgence, especially now when, deprived by death of her sole relative, she had only her own unaided exertions to rely on. Frances went into an inner room to take off her bonnet, and she came out a model of frugal neatness, with her well-fitting black stuff dress, so accurately defining her elegant bust and taper waist, with her spotless white collar turned back from a fair and shapely neck, with her plenteous brown hair arranged in smooth bands on her temples, and in her large Grecian plait behind : ornaments she had none—neither brooch, ring, nor ribbon ; she did well enough without them—perfection of fit, proportion of form, grace of carriage, agreeably supplied their place. Her eye, as she re-entered the small sitting-room, instantly sought mine, which was just then lingering on the hearth ; I knew she read at once the sort of inward ruth and pitying pain which the chill vacancy of that hearth stirred in my soul : quick to penetrate, quick to determine, and quicker to put in practice, she had in a moment tied a holland apron round her waist ; then she disappeared, and reappeared with a basket ; it had a cover ; she opened it, and produced wood and coal ; deftly and compactly she arranged them in the grate.

'It is her whole stock, and she will exhaust it out of hospitality,' thought I.

'What are you going to do?' I asked : 'not surely to light a fire this hot evening ? I shall be smothered.'

'Indeed, Monsieur, I feel it very chilly since the rain began ; besides, I must boil the water for my tea, for I take tea on Sundays ; you will be obliged to try and bear the heat.'

She had struck a light ; the wood was already in a blaze ; and truly, when contrasted with the darkness, the wild tumult of the tempest without, that peaceful glow which began to beam on the now animated hearth seemed very cheering. A low, purring sound, from some quarter, announced that another being, besides myself, was pleased with the change ; a black cat, roused by the light from its sleep on a little cushioned foot-stool, came and rubbed its head against Frances' gown as she knelt ; she caressed it, saying it had been a favourite with her 'pauvre tante Julienne.'

The fire being lit, the hearth swept, and a small kettle of a very antique pattern, such as I thought I remembered to have seen in old farmhouses in England, placed over the now ruddy flame, Frances' hands were washed, and her apron removed in an instant; then she opened a cupboard, and took out a tea-tray, on which she had soon arranged a china tea-equipage, whose pattern, shape, and size, denoted a remote antiquity; a little, old-fashioned silver spoon was deposited in each saucer; and a pair of silver tongs, equally old-fashioned, were laid on the sugar-basin; from the cupboard, too, was produced a tiny silver cream-ewer, not larger than an egg-shell. While making these preparations, she chanced to look up, and, reading curiosity in my eyes, she smiled and asked—'Is this like England, Monsieur?'

'Like the England of a hundred years ago,' I replied.

'Is it truly? Well, everything on this tray is at least a hundred years old: these cups, these spoons, this ewer, are all heirlooms; my great-grandmother left them to my grandmother, she to my mother, and my mother brought them with her from England to Switzerland, and left them to me; and, ever since I was a little girl, I have thought I should like to carry them back to England, whence they came.'

She put some pistolets on the table; she made the tea, as foreigners do make tea—*i.e.*, at the rate of a teaspoonful to half-a-dozen cups; she placed me in a chair, and, as I took it, she asked, with a sort of exultation—'Will it make you think yourself at home for a moment?'

'If I had a home in England, I believe it would recall it,' I answered; and, in truth, there was a sort of illusion in seeing the fair-complexioned English-looking girl presiding at the English meal, and speaking in the English language.

'You have then no home?' was her remark.

'None, nor ever have had. If ever I possess a home, it must be of my own making, and the task is yet to begin.'

And, as I spoke, a pang, new to me, shot across my heart: it was a pang of mortification at the humility of my position, and the inadequacy of my means; while with that pang was born a strong desire to do more, earn more, be more, possess more; and in the increased possessions, my roused and eager spirit panted to include the home I had never had, the wife I inwardly vowed to win.

Frances' tea was little better than hot water, sugar, and milk; and her pistolets, with which she could not offer me butter, were sweet to my palate as manna.

The repast over, and the treasured plate and porcelain being washed and put by, the bright table rubbed still brighter, 'le chat de ma tante Julienne' also being fed with provisions brought forth on a plate for its special use, a few stray cinders, and a scattering of ashes too, being swept from the hearth, Frances at last sat down; and then, as she took a chair opposite to me, she betrayed, for the first time, a little embarrassment; and no wonder, for indeed I had unconsciously watched her rather too closely, followed all her steps and all her movements a little too perseveringly with my eyes, for she mesmerized me by the grace and alertness of her action—by the deft, cleanly, and even decorative effect resulting from each touch of her slight and fine fingers; and when, at last, she subsided to stillness, the intelligence of her face seemed beauty to me, and I dwelt on it accordingly. Her colour, however, rising, rather than settling with repose, and her eyes remaining downcast, though I kept waiting for the lids to be raised that I might drink a ray of the light I loved—a light where fire dissolved in softness, where affection tempered penetration, where, just now at least, pleasure played with thought—this expectation not being gratified, I began at last to suspect that I had probably myself to blame for the disappointment; I must cease gazing, and begin talking, if I wished to break the spell under which she now sat motionless; so recollecting the composing effect which an authoritative tone and manner had ever been wont to produce on her, I said—'Get one of your English books, Mademoiselle, for the rain yet falls heavily, and will probably detain me half an hour longer.'

Released, and set at ease, up she rose, got her book, and accepted at once the chair I placed for her at my side. She had selected 'Paradise Lost' from her shelf of classics, thinking, I suppose, the religious character of the book best adapted it to Sunday; I told her to begin at the beginning, and while she read Milton's invocation to that heavenly muse, who on the 'secret top of Oreb or Sinai' had taught the Hebrew shepherd how, in the womb of chaos, the conception of a world had originated and ripened, I enjoyed, undisturbed, the treble pleasure of having her near me, hearing the sound of her voice—a sound sweet and satisfying in my ear—and looking, by intervals, at her face: of this last privilege, I chiefly availed myself when I found fault with an intonation, a pause, or an emphasis; as long as I dogmatised, I might also gaze, without exciting too warm a flush.

'Enough,' said I, when she had gone through some half-dozen pages (a work of time with her, for she read slowly and paused often to ask and receive information)—'enough; and now the rain is ceasing, and I must soon go.'

For indeed, at that moment, looking towards the window, I saw it all blue; the thunder-clouds were broken and scattered, and the setting August sun sent a gleam like the reflection of rubies through the lattice. I got up; I drew on my gloves.

'You have not yet found another situation to supply the place of that from which you were dismissed by Mdlle. Reuter?'

'No, Monsieur; I have made inquiries everywhere, but they all ask me for references; and to speak truth, I do not like to apply to the directress, because I consider she acted neither justly nor honourably towards me; she used underhand means to set my pupils against me and thereby render me unhappy while I held my place in her establishment, and she eventually deprived me of it by a masked and hypocritical manœuvre, pretending that she was acting for my good, but really snatching from me my chief means of subsistence, at a crisis when not only my own life, but that of another, depended on my exertions: of her I will nevermore ask a favour.'

'How, then, do you propose to get on? How do you live now?'

'I have still my lace-mending trade; with care it will keep me from starvation, and I doubt not by dint of exertion to get better employment yet; it is only a fortnight since I began to try; my courage or hopes are by no means worn out yet.'

'And if you get what you wish, what then? what are your ultimate views?'

'To save enough to cross the Channel: I always look to England as my Canaan.'

'Well, well—ere long I shall pay you another visit; good-evening now,' and I left her rather abruptly; I had much ado to resist a strong inward impulse, urging me to take a warmer, more expressive leave; what so natural as to fold her for a moment in a close embrace, to imprint one kiss on her cheek or forehead? I was not unreasonable—that was all I wanted; satisfied on that point, I could go away content; and Reason denied me even this; she ordered me to turn my eyes from her face, and my steps from her apartment—to quit her as dryly and coldly as I would have quitted old Madame Pelet. I obeyed, but I swore rancorously to be avenged one day. 'I'll earn a right to do as I please in this matter, or I'll die in the contest. I have one object before me now—to get that Genevese girl for my wife; and my wife she shall be—that is, provided she has as much, or half as much regard for her master as he has for her. And would she be so docile, so smiling, so happy under my instructions if she had not? Would she sit at my side when I dictate or correct, with such a still, contented, halcyon mien?' For I had ever remarked, that however sad or harassed her countenance might be when I entered a room, yet after I had been near her, spoken to her a few words, given her some directions, uttered perhaps some reproofs, she would, all at once, nestle into a nook of happiness, and look up serene and revived. The reproofs suited her best of all: while I scolded she would chip away with her penknife at a pencil or a pen; fidgeting a little, pouting a little, defending herself by monosyllables, and when I deprived her of the pen or pencil, fearing it would be all cut away, and when I interdicted even the monosyllabic defence, for the purpose of working up the subdued excitement a little higher, she would at last raise her eyes and give me a certain glance, sweetened with gaiety, and pointed with defiance, which, to speak truth, thrilled me as nothing had ever done, and made me, in a fashion (though happily she did not know it), her subject, if not her slave. After such little scenes her spirits would maintain their flow, often for some hours, and, as I remarked before, her health therefrom took a sustenance and vigour which, previously to the event of her aunt's death and her dismissal, had almost recreated her whole frame.

It has taken me several minutes to write these last sentences; but I had thought all their purport during the brief interval of descending the stairs from Frances' room. Just as I was opening the outer door, I remembered the twenty francs which I had not restored; I paused: impossible to carry them away with me; difficult to force them back on their original owner; I had now seen her in her own humble abode, witnessed the dignity of her poverty, the pride of order, the fastidious care of conservatism, obvious in the arrangement and economy of her little home; I was sure she would not suffer herself to be excused paying her debts; I was certain the favour of indemnity would be accepted from no hand, perhaps least of all from mine: yet these four five-franc pieces were a burden to my self-respect, and I must get rid of them. An expedient—a clumsy one no doubt, but the best I could devise—suggested itself to me. I darted up the stairs, knocked, re-entered the room as if in haste.

'Mademoiselle, I have forgotten one of my gloves; I must have left it here.'

She instantly rose to seek it; as she turned her back, I—being now at the hearth—noiselessly lifted a little vase, one of a set of china ornaments, as old-fashioned as the teacups—slipped the money under it, then saying—'Oh, here is my glove! I had dropped it within the fender; good-evening, Mademoiselle,' I made my second exit.

Brief as my impromptu return had been, it had afforded me time to pick up a heartache; I remarked that Frances had already removed the red embers of her cheerful little fire from the grate: forced to calculate every item, to save in every detail, she had instantly on my departure retrenched a luxury too expensive to be enjoyed alone.

'I am glad it is not yet winter,' thought I; 'but in two months more come the winds and rains of November; would to God that before then I could earn the right, and the power, to shovel coals into that grate *ad libitum!*'

Already the pavement was drying; a balmy and fresh breeze stirred the air, purified by lightning; I felt the West behind me, where spread a sky like opal; azure immingled with crimson: the enlarged sun, glorious in Tyrian tints, dipped his brim already; stepping, as I was, eastward, I faced a vast bank of clouds, but also I had before me the arch of an evening rainbow; a perfect rainbow—high, wide, vivid. I looked long; my eye drank in the scene, and I suppose my brain must have absorbed it; for that night, after lying awake in pleasant fever a long time, watching the silent sheet lightning, which still played among the retreating clouds, and flashed silvery over the stars, I at last fell asleep; and then in a dream were reproduced the setting sun, the bank of clouds, the mighty rainbow. I stood, methought, on a terrace; I leaned over a parapeted wall; there was space below me, depth I could not fathom, but hearing an endless dash of waves, I believed it to be the sea; sea spread to the horizon; sea of changeful green and intense blue: all was soft in the distance; all vapour-veiled. A spark of gold glistened on the line between water and air, floated up, approached, enlarged, changed; the object hung midway between heaven and earth, under the arch of the rainbow; the soft but dusk clouds diffused behind. It hovered as on wings; pearly, fleecy, gleaming air streamed like raiment round it; light, tinted with carnation, coloured what seemed face and limbs; a large star shone with still lustre on an angel's forehead; an upraised arm and hand, glancing like a ray, pointed to the bow overhead, and a voice in my heart whispered—'Hope smiles on Effort!'

CHAPTER XX

A COMPETENCY was what I wanted; a competency it was now my aim and resolve to secure; but never had I been farther from the mark. With August the school-year (l'année scolaire) closed, the examinations concluded, the prizes were adjudged, the schools dispersed, the gates of all colleges, the doors of all pensionnats shut, not to be re-opened till the beginning or middle of October. The last day of August was at hand, and what was my position? Had I advanced a step since the commencement of the past quarter? On the contrary, I had receded one. By renouncing my engagement as English master in Mdlle. Reuter's establishment, I had voluntarily cut off 20*l.* from my yearly income; I had diminished my 60*l.* per annum to 40*l.*, and even that sum I now held by a very precarious tenure.

It is some time since I made any reference to M. Pelet. The moonlight walk is, I think, the last incident recorded in this narrative where that gentleman cuts any conspicuous figure: the fact is, since that event, a change had come over the spirit of our intercourse. He, indeed, ignorant that the still hour, a cloudless moon, and an open lattice had revealed to me the secret of his selfish love and false friendship, would have continued smooth and complaisant as ever; but I grew spiny as a porcupine, and inflexible as a blackthorn cudgel; I never had a smile for his raillery, never a moment for his society; his invitations to take coffee with him in his parlour were invariably rejected, and very stiffly and sternly rejected too; his jesting allusions to the directress (which he still continued) were heard with a grim calm very different from the petulant pleasure they were formerly wont to excite. For a long time Pelet bore with my frigid demeanour very patiently; he even increased his attentions; but finding that even a cringing politeness failed to thaw or move me, he at last altered too; in his turn he cooled; his invitations ceased; his countenance became suspicious and overcast, and I read, in the perplexed yet brooding aspect of his brow, a constant examination and comparison of premises, and an anxious endeavour to draw thence some explanatory inference. Ere long, I fancy, he succeeded, for he was not without penetration; perhaps, too, Mdlle. Zoraïde might have aided him in the solution of the enigma; at any rate I soon found that the uncertainty of doubt had vanished from his manner; renouncing all pretence of friendship and cordiality, he adopted a reserved, formal, but still scrupulously polite deportment. This was the point to which I had wished to bring him, and I was now again comparatively at my ease. I did not, it is true, like my position in his house; but being freed from the annoyance of false professions and double-dealing, I could endure it, especially as no heroic sentiment of hatred or jealousy of the director distracted my philosophical soul; he had not, I found, wounded me in a very tender point, the wound was so soon and so radically healed, leaving only a sense of contempt for the treacherous fashion in which it had been inflicted, and a lasting mistrust of the hand which I had detected attempting to stab in the dark.

This state of things continued till about the middle of July, and then there was a little change; Pelet came home one night, an hour after his usual time, in a state of unequivocal intoxication, a thing anomalous with him; for if he had some of the worst faults of his countrymen, he had also one at least of their virtues, *i.e.* sobriety. So drunk, however, was he upon this occasion, that after having roused the whole establishment (except the pupils, whose dormitory, being over the classes in a building apart from the dwelling-house, was consequently out of the reach of disturbance) by violently ringing the hall-bell and ordering lunch to be brought in immediately, for he imagined it was noon, whereas the city bells had just tolled midnight; after having furiously rated the servants for their want of punctuality, and gone near to chastise his poor old mother, who advised him to go to bed, he began raving dreadfully about 'le maudit Anglais, Creemsvort.' I had not yet retired; some German books I had got hold of had kept me up late; I heard the uproar below, and could distinguish the director's voice exalted in a manner as appalling as it was unusual. Opening my door a little, I became aware of a demand on his part for 'Creemsvort' to be brought down to him that he might cut his throat on the hall-table and wash his honour, which he affirmed to be in a dirty condition, in infernal British blood. 'He is either mad or drunk,' thought I, 'and in either case the old woman and the servants will be the better of a man's assistance,' so I descended straight to the hall. I found him staggering about, his eyes in a fine frenzy rolling—a pretty sight he was, a just medium between the fool and the lunatic.

'Come, M. Pelet,' said I, 'you had better go to bed,' and I took hold of his arm. His excitement, of course, increased greatly at sight and touch of the individual for whose blood he had been making application: he struggled and struck with fury—but a drunken man is no match for a sober one; and, even in his normal state, Pelet's worn-out frame could not have stood against my sound one. I got him up-stairs, and, in process of time, to bed. During the operation he did not fail to utter comminations, which, though broken, had a sense in them; while stigmatizing me as the treacherous spawn of a perfidious country, he, in the same breath, anathematized Zoraïde Reuter; he termed her 'femme sotte et vicieuse,' who, in a fit of lewd caprice, had thrown herself away on an unprincipled adventurer; directing the point of the last appellation by a furious blow, obliquely aimed at me. I left him in the act of bounding elastically out of the bed into which I had tucked him; but as I took the precaution of turning the key in the door behind me, I retired to my own room, assured of his safe custody till the morning, and free to draw undisturbed conclusions from the scene I had just witnessed.

Now, it was precisely about this time that the directress, stung by my coldness, bewitched by my scorn, and excited by the preference she suspected me of cherishing for another, had fallen into a snare of her own laying—was herself caught in the meshes of the very passion with which she wished to entangle me. Conscious of the state of things in that quarter, I gathered, from the condition in which I saw my employer, that his ladye-love had betrayed the alienation of her affections—inclinations, rather, I would say; affection is a word at once too warm and too pure for the subject—had let him see that the cavity of her hollow heart, emptied of his image, was now occupied by that of his usher. It was not without some surprise that I found myself obliged to entertain this view of the case; Pelet, with his old-established school, was so convenient, so profitable a match—Zoraïde was so calculating, so interested a woman—I wondered mere personal preference could, in her mind, have prevailed for a moment over worldly advantage: yet, it was evident, from what Pelet said, that, not only had she repulsed him, but had even let slip expressions of partiality for me. One of his drunken exclamations was, 'And the jade doats on your youth, you raw blockhead! and talks of your noble deportment, as she calls your accursed English formality—and your pure morals, forsooth! des mœurs de Caton, a-t-elle dit—sotte!' Hers, I thought, must be a curious soul, where, in spite of a strong natural tendency to estimate unduly advantages of wealth and station, the sardonic disdain of a fortuneless subordinate had wrought a deeper impression than could be imprinted by the most flattering assiduities of a prosperous *chef d'institution*. I smiled inwardly; and, strange to say, though my *amour-propre* was excited not disagreeably by the conquest, my better feelings remained untouched. Next day, when I saw the directress, and when she made an excuse to meet me in the corridor, and besought my notice by a demeanour and look subdued to Helot humility, I could not love, I could scarcely pity her. To answer briefly and dryly some interesting inquiry about my health—to pass her by with a stern bow—was all I could; her presence and manner had then, and for some time previously and consequently, a singular effect upon me: they sealed up all that was good, elicited all that was noxious in my nature; sometimes they enervated my senses, but they always hardened my heart. I was aware of the detriment done, and quarrelled with myself for the change. I had ever hated a tyrant; and, behold, the possession of a slave, self-given, went near to transform me into what I abhorred! There was at once a sort of low gratification in receiving this luscious incense from an attractive and still young worshipper; and an irritating sense of degradation in the very experience of the pleasure. When she stole about me with the soft step of a slave, I felt at once barbarous and sensual as a pasha. I endured her homage sometimes; sometimes I rebuked it. My indifference or harshness served equally to increase the evil I desired to check.

'Que le dédain lui sied bien!' I once overheard her say to her mother: 'il est beau comme Apollon quand il sourit de son air hautain.'

And the jolly old dame laughed, and said she thought her daughter was bewitched, for I had no point of a handsome man about me, except being straight and without deformity. 'Pour moi,' she continued, 'il me fait tout l'effet d'un chat-huant, avec ses besicles.'

Worthy old girl! I could have gone and kissed her had she not been a little too old, too fat, and too red-faced; her sensible, truthful words seemed so wholesome, contrasted with the morbid illusions of her daughter.

When Pelet awoke on the morning after his frenzy fit, he retained no recollection of what had happened the previous night, and his mother fortunately had the discretion to refrain from informing him that I had been a witness of his degradation. He did not again have recourse to wine for curing his griefs, but even in his sober mood he soon showed that the iron of jealousy had entered into his soul. A thorough Frenchman, the national characteristic of ferocity had not been omitted by nature in compounding the ingredients of his character; it had appeared first in his access of drunken wrath, when some of his demonstrations of hatred to my person were of a truly fiendish character, and now it was more covertly betrayed by momentary contractions of the features, and flashes of fierceness in his light blue eyes, when their glance chanced to encounter mine. He absolutely avoided speaking to me; I was now spared even the falsehood of his politeness. In this state of our mutual relations, my soul rebelled, sometimes almost ungovernably, against living in the house and discharging the service of such a man; but who is free from the constraint of circumstances? At that time I was not: I used to rise each morning eager to shake off his yoke, and go out with my portmanteau under my arm, if a beggar, at least a freeman; and in the evening, when I came back from the pensionnat de demoiselles, a certain pleasant voice in my ear; a certain face, so intelligent, yet so docile, so reflective, yet so soft, in my eyes; a certain cast of character, at once proud and pliant, sensitive and sagacious, serious and ardent, in my head; a certain tone of feeling, fervid and modest, refined and practical, pure and powerful, delighting and troubling my memory—visions of new ties I longed to contract, of new duties I longed to undertake, had taken the rover and the rebel out of me, and had shown endurance of my hated lot in the light of a Spartan virtue.

But Pelet's fury subsided: a fortnight sufficed for its rise, progress, and extinction; in that space of time the dismissal of the obnoxious teacher had been effected in the neighbouring house, and in the same interval I had declared my resolution to follow and find out my pupil, and upon my application for her address being refused, I had summarily resigned my own post. This last act seemed at once to restore Mdlle. Reuter to her senses; her sagacity, her judgment, so long misled by a fascinating delusion, struck again into the right track the moment that delusion vanished. By the right track, I do not mean the steep and difficult path of principle—in that path she never trod; but the plain highway of common sense, from which she had of late widely diverged. When there she carefully sought, and having found, industriously pursued the trail of her old suitor, M. Pelet. She soon overtook him. What arts she employed to soothe and blind him I know not, but she succeeded both in allaying his wrath, and hoodwinking his discernment, as was soon proved by the alteration in his mien and manner; she must have managed to convince him that I neither was, nor ever had been, a rival of his, for the fortnight of fury against me terminated in a fit of exceeding graciousness and amenity, not unmixed with a dash of exulting self-complacency, more ludicrous than irritating. Pelet's bachelor's life had been passed in proper French style, with due disregard to moral restraint, and I thought his married life promised to be very French also. He often boasted to me what a terror he had been to certain husbands of his acquaintance; I perceived it would not now be difficult to pay him back in his own coin.

The crisis drew on. No sooner had the holidays commenced than note of preparation for some momentous event sounded all through the premises of Pelet; painters, polishers, and upholsterers were immediately set to work, and there was talk of 'la chambre de Madame,' 'le salon de Madame.' Not deeming it probable that the old duenna at present graced with that title in our house had inspired her son with such enthusiasm of filial piety as to induce him to fit up apartments expressly for her use, I concluded, in common with the cook, the two housemaids, and the kitchen-scullion, that a new and more juvenile Madame was destined to be the tenant of these gay chambers.

Presently official announcement of the coming event was put forth. In another week's time M. François Pelet, directeur, and Mdlle. Zoraïde Reuter, directrice, were to be joined together in the bands of matrimony. Monsieur, in person, heralded the fact to me; terminating his communication by an obliging expression of his desire that I should continue, as heretofore, his ablest assistant and most trusted friend; and a proposition to raise my salary by an additional two hundred francs per annum. I thanked him, gave no conclusive answer at the time, and, when he had left me, threw off my blouse, put on my coat, and set out on a long walk outside the Porte de Flandre, in order, as I thought, to cool my blood, calm my nerves, and shake my disarranged ideas into some order. In fact, I had just received what was virtually my dismissal. I could not conceal, I did not desire to conceal from myself the conviction that, being now certain that Mdlle. Reuter was destined to become Madame Pelet, it would not do for me to remain a dependent dweller in the house which was soon to be hers. Her present demeanour towards me was deficient neither in dignity nor propriety; but I knew her former feeling was unchanged. Decorum now repressed, and Policy masked it, but Opportunity would be too strong for either of these—Temptation would shiver their restraints.

I was no pope—I could not boast infallibility: in short, if I stayed, the probability was that, in three months' time, a practical modern French novel would be in full process of concoction under the roof of the unsuspecting Pelet. Now, modern French novels are not to my taste, either practically or theoretically. Limited as had yet been my experience of life, I had once had the opportunity of contemplating, near at hand, an example of the results produced by a course of interesting and romantic domestic treachery. No golden halo of fiction was about this example; I saw it bare and real; and it was very loathsome. I saw a mind degraded by the practice of mean subterfuge, by the habit of perfidious deception, and a body depraved by the infectious influence of the vice-polluted soul. I had suffered much from the forced and prolonged view of this spectacle; those sufferings I did not now regret, for their simple recollection acted as a most wholesome antidote to temptation. They had inscribed on my reason the conviction that unlawful pleasure, trenching on another's rights, is delusive and envenomed pleasure—its hollowness disappoints at the time, its poison cruelly tortures afterwards, its effects deprave for ever.

From all this resulted the conclusion that I must leave Pelet's, and that instantly; 'but,' said Prudence, 'you know not where to go, nor how to live;' and then the dream of true love came over me: Frances Henri seemed to stand at my side; her slender waist to invite my arm; her hand to court my hand; I felt it was made to nestle in mine; I could not relinquish my right to it, nor could I withdraw my eyes for ever from hers, where I saw so much happiness, such a correspondence of heart with heart; over whose expression I had such influence; where I could kindle bliss, infuse awe, stir deep delight, rouse sparkling spirit, and sometimes waken pleasurable dread. My hopes to win and possess, my resolutions to work and rise, rose in array against me; and here I was about to plunge into the gulf of absolute destitution; 'and all this,' suggested an inward voice, 'because you fear an evil which may never happen!' 'It will happen; you *know* it will,' answered that stubborn monitor, Conscience. 'Do what you feel is right; obey me, and even in the sloughs of want I will plant for you firm footing.' And then, as I walked fast along the road, there rose upon me a strange, inly-felt idea of some Great Being, unseen, but all present, who in His beneficence desired only my welfare, and now watched the struggle of good and evil in my heart, and waited to see whether I should obey His voice, heard in the whispers of my conscience, or lend an ear to the sophisms by which His enemy and mine—the Spirit of Evil—sought to lead me astray. Rough and steep was the path indicated by divine suggestion; mossy and declining the green way along which Temptation strewed flowers; but whereas, methought, the Deity of Love, the Friend of all that exists, would smile well-pleased were I to gird up my loins and address myself to the rude ascent; so, on the other hand, each inclination to the velvet declivity seemed to kindle a gleam of triumph on the brow of the man-hating, God-defying demon. Sharp and short I turned round; fast I retraced my steps; in half-an-hour I was again at M. Pelet's: I sought him in his study; brief parley, concise explanation sufficed; my manner proved that I was resolved; he, perhaps, at heart, approved my decision. After twenty minutes' conversation, I re-entered my own room, self-deprived of the means of living, self-sentenced to leave my present home, with a short notice of a week in which to provide another.

CHAPTER XXI

DIRECTLY as I closed the door, I saw laid on the table two letters; my thought was, that they were notes of invitation from the friends of some of my pupils; I had received such marks of attention occasionally, and with me, who had no friends, correspondence of more interest was out of the question; the postman's arrival had never yet been an event of interest to me since I came to Brussels. I laid my hand carelessly on the documents, and coldly and slowly glancing at them, I prepared to break the seals; my eye was arrested and my hand too; I saw what excited me, as if I had found a vivid picture where I expected only to discover a blank page: on one cover was an English post-mark; on the other, a lady's clear, fine autograph; the last I opened first:—

'MONSIEUR,—

I FOUND out what you had done the very morning after your visit to me; you might be sure I should dust the china every day; and, as no one but you had been in my room for a week, and as fairy-money is not current in Brussels, I could not doubt who left the twenty francs on the chimney-piece. I thought I heard you stir the vase when I was stooping to look for your glove under the table, and I wondered you should imagine it had got into such a little cup. Now, Monsieur, the money is not mine, and I shall not keep it; I will not send it in this note because it might be lost—besides, it is heavy; but I will restore it to you the first time I see you, and you must make no difficulties about taking it; because, in the first place, I am sure, Monsieur, you can understand that one likes to pay one's debts; that it is satisfactory to owe no man anything; and, in the second place, I can now very well afford to be honest, as I am provided with a situation. This last circumstance is, indeed, the reason of my writing to you, for it is pleasant to communicate good news; and, in these days, I have only my master to whom I can tell anything.

'A week ago, Monsieur, I was sent for by a Mrs. Wharton, an English lady; her eldest daughter was going to be married, and some rich relation having made her a present of a veil and dress in costly old lace, as precious, they said, almost as jewels, but a little damaged by time, I was commissioned to put them in repair. I had to do it at the house; they gave me, besides, some embroidery to complete, and nearly a week elapsed before I had finished everything. While I worked, Miss Wharton often came into the room and sat with me, and so did Mrs. Wharton; they made me talk English; asked how I had learned to speak it so well; then they inquired what I knew besides—what books I had read; soon they seemed to make a sort of wonder of me, considering me no doubt as a learned grisette. One afternoon, Mrs. Wharton brought in a Parisian lady to test the accuracy of my knowledge of French; the result of it was that, owing probably in a great degree to the mother's and daughter's good humour about the marriage, which inclined them to do beneficent deeds, and partly, I think, because they are naturally benevolent people, they decided that the wish I had expressed to do something more than mend lace was a very legitimate one; and the same day they took me in their carriage to Mrs. D.'s, who is the directress of the first English school at Brussels. It seems she happened to be in want of a French lady to give lessons in geography, history, grammar, and composition, in the French language. Mrs. Wharton recommended me very warmly; and, as two of her younger daughters are pupils in the house, her patronage availed to get me the place. It was settled that I am to attend six hours daily (for, happily, it was not required that I should live in the house; I should have been sorry to leave my lodgings), and, for this, Mrs. D. will give me twelve hundred francs per annum.

'You see, therefore, Monsieur, that I am now rich; richer almost than I ever hoped to be: I feel thankful for it, especially as my sight was beginning to be injured by constant working at fine lace; and I was getting, too, very weary of sitting up late at nights, and yet not being able to find time for reading or study. I began to fear that I should fall ill, and be unable to pay my way; this fear is now, in a great measure, removed; and, in truth, Monsieur, I am very grateful to God for the relief; and I feel it necessary, almost, to speak of my happiness to some one who is kind-hearted enough to derive joy from seeing others joyful. I could not, therefore, resist the temptation of writing to you; I argued with myself it is very pleasant for me to write, and it will not be exactly painful, though it may be tiresome to Monsieur to read. Do not be too angry with my circumlocution and inelegancies of expression, and believe me

'Your attached pupil,
'F. E. HENRI.'

Having read this letter I mused on its contents for a few moments—whether with sentiments pleasurable or otherwise I will hereafter note—and then took up the other. It was directed in a hand to me unknown—small, and rather neat; neither masculine nor exactly feminine; the seal bore a coat of arms, concerning which I could only decipher that it was not that of the Seacombe family, consequently the epistle could be from none of my almost forgotten, and certainly quite forgetting patrician relations. From whom, then, was it? I removed the envelope; the note folded within ran as follows:—

'I have no doubt in the world that you are doing well in that greasy Flanders; living probably on the fat of the unctuous land; sitting like a black-haired, tawny-skinned, long-nosed Israelite by the flesh-pots of Egypt; or like a rascally son of Levi near the brass cauldrons of the sanctuary, and every now and then plunging in a consecrated hook, and drawing out of the sea of broth the fattest of heave-shoulders and the fleshiest of wave-breasts. I know this, because you never write to any one in England. Thankless dog that you are! I, by the sovereign efficacy of my recommendation, got you the place where you are now living in clover, and yet not a word of gratitude or even acknowledgment have you ever offered in return; but I am coming to see you, and small conception can you, with your addled aristocratic brains, form of the sort of moral kicking I have, ready packed in my carpet-bag, destined to be presented to you immediately on my arrival.

'Meantime I know all about your affairs, and have just got information, by Brown's last letter, that you are said to be on the point of forming an advantageous match with a pursy little Belgian schoolmistress—a Mdlle. Zénobie, or some such name. Won't I have a look at her when I come over? And this you may rely on: if she pleases my taste, or if I think it worth while in a pecuniary point of view, I'll pounce on your prize and bear her away triumphant in spite of your teeth. Yet I don't like dumpies either, and Brown says she is little and stout—the better fitted for a wiry, starved-looking chap like you.

'Be on the look-out, for you know neither the day nor hour when your—— (I don't wish to blaspheme, so I'll leave a blank)—cometh.

'Yours truly,
'HUNSDEN YORKE HUNSDEN.'

'Humph!' said I; and ere I laid the letter down, I again glanced at the small, neat handwriting, not a bit like that of a mercantile man, nor, indeed, of any man except Hunsden himself. They talk of affinities between the autograph and the character: what affinity was there here?

I recalled the writer's peculiar face and certain traits I suspected, rather than knew, to appertain to his nature, and I answered, 'A great deal.'

Hunsden, then, was coming to Brussels, and coming I knew not when; coming charged with the expectation of finding me on the summit of prosperity, about to be married, to step into a warm nest, to lie comfortably down, by the side of a snug well-fed little mate.

'I wish him joy of the fidelity of the picture he has painted,' thought I. 'What will he say when, instead of a pair of plump turtle-doves, billing and cooing in a bower of roses, he finds a single lean cormorant, standing mateless and shelterless on poverty's bleak cliff? Oh, confound him! Let him come, and let him laugh at the contrast between rumour and fact. Were he the devil himself, instead of being merely very like him, I'd not condescend to get out of his way, or to forge a smile or a cheerful word wherewith to avert his sarcasm.'

Then I recurred to the other letter: that struck a chord whose sound I could not deaden by thrusting my fingers into my ears, for it vibrated within; and though its swell might be exquisite music, its cadence was a groan.

That Frances was relieved from the pressure of want, that the curse of excessive labour was taken off her, filled me with happiness; that her first thought in prosperity should be to augment her joy by sharing it with me, met and satisfied the wish of my heart. Two results of her letter were then pleasant, sweet as two draughts of nectar; but applying my lips for the third time to the cup, and they were excoriated as with vinegar and gall.

Two persons whose desires are moderate may live well enough in Brussels on an income which would scarcely afford a respectable maintenance for one in London: and that, not because the necessaries of life are so much dearer in the latter capital, or taxes so much higher than in the former, but because the English surpass in folly all the nations on God's earth, and are more abject slaves to custom, to opinion, to the desire to keep up a certain appearance, than the Italians are to priestcraft, the French to vainglory, the Russians to their Czar, or the Germans to black beer. I have seen a degree of sense in the modest arrangement of one homely Belgian household, that might put to shame the elegance, the superfluities, the luxuries, the strained refinements of a hundred genteel English mansions. In Belgium, provided you can make money, you may save it; this is scarcely possible in England; ostentation there lavishes in a month what industry has earned in a year. More shame to all classes in that most bountiful and beggarly country for their servile following of Fashion; I could write a chapter or two on this subject, but must forbear, at least for the present. Had I retained my 60*l.* per annum, I could, now that Frances was in possession of 50*l.*, have gone straight to her this very evening, and spoken out the words which, repressed, kept fretting my heart with fever; our united income would, as we should have managed it, have sufficed well for our mutual support; since we lived in a country where economy was not confounded with meanness, where frugality in dress, food, and furniture, was not synonymous with vulgarity in these various points. But the placeless usher, bare of resource, and unsupported by connections, must not think of this; such a sentiment as love, such a word as marriage, were misplaced in his heart, and on his lips. Now for the first time did I truly feel what it was to be poor; now did the sacrifice I had made in casting from me the means of living put on a new aspect; instead of a correct, just, honourable act, it seemed a deed at once light and fanatical; I took several turns in my room, under the goading influence of most poignant remorse; I walked a quarter of an hour from the wall to the window; and at the window, self-reproach seemed to face me: at the wall, self-disdain: all at once out spoke Conscience:—

'Down, stupid tormentors!' cried she; 'the man has done his duty; you shall not bait him thus by thoughts of what might have been; he relinquished a temporary and contingent good to avoid a permanent and certain evil; he did well. Let him reflect now, and when your blinding dust and deafening hum subside, he will discover a path.'

I sat down; I propped my forehead on both my hands; I thought and thought an hour—two hours; vainly. I seemed like one sealed in a subterranean vault, who gazes at utter blackness; at blackness ensured by yard-thick stone walls around, and by piles of building above, expecting light to penetrate through granite, and through cement firm as granite. But there are chinks, or there may be chinks, in the best adjusted masonry; there was a chink in my cavernous cell; for, eventually, I saw, or seemed to see, a ray—pallid, indeed, and cold, and doubtful, but still a ray, for it showed that narrow path which conscience had promised. After two, three hours' torturing research in brain and memory, I disinterred certain remains of circumstances, and conceived a hope that by putting them together an expedient might be framed, and a resource discovered. The circumstances were briefly these:—

Some three months ago M. Pelet had, on the occasion of his fête, given the boys a treat, which treat consisted in a party of pleasure to a certain place of public resort in the outskirts of Brussels, of which I do not at this moment remember the name, but near it were several of those lakelets called étangs; and there was one étang, larger than the rest, where on holidays people were accustomed to amuse themselves by rowing round it in little boats. The boys having eaten an unlimited quantity of 'gaufres,' and drank several bottles of Louvain beer, amid the shades of a garden made and provided for such crams, petitioned the director for leave to take a row on the étang. Half a dozen of the eldest succeeded in obtaining leave, and I was commissioned to accompany them as surveillant. Among the half-dozen happened to be a certain Jean Baptiste Vandenhuten, a most ponderous young Flamand, not tall, but even now, at the early age of sixteen, possessing a breadth and depth of personal development truly national. It chanced that Jean was the first lad to step into the boat; he stumbled, rolled to one side, the boat revolted at his weight and capsized. Vandenhuten sank like lead, rose, sank again. My coat and waistcoat were off in an instant; I had not been brought up at Eton and boated and bathed and swam there ten long years for nothing; it was a natural and easy act for me to leap to the rescue. The lads and the boatman yelled; they thought there would be two deaths by drowning instead of one; but as Jean rose the third time, I clutched him by one leg and the collar, and in three minutes more both he and I were safe landed. To speak heaven's truth, my merit in the action was small indeed, for I had run no risk, and subsequently did not even catch cold from the wetting; but when M. and Madame Vandenhuten, of whom Jean Baptiste was the sole hope, came to hear of the exploit, they seemed to think I had evinced a bravery and devotion which no thanks could sufficiently repay. Madame, in particular, was 'certain I must have dearly loved their sweet son, or I would not thus have hazarded my own life to save his.' Monsieur, an honest-looking, though phlegmatic man, said very little, but he would not suffer me to leave the room till I had promised that in case I ever stood in need of help I would, by applying to him, give him a chance of discharging the obligation under which he affirmed I had laid him. These words, then, were my glimmer of light; it was here I found my sole outlet: and in truth, though the cold light roused, it did not cheer me, nor did the outlet seem such as I should like to pass through. Right I had none to M. Vandenhuten's good offices; it was not on the ground of merit I could apply to him; no, I must stand on that of necessity. I had no work: I wanted work; my best chance of obtaining it lay in securing his recommendation. This I knew could be had by asking for it: not to ask, because the request revolted my pride and contradicted my habits, would, I felt, be an indulgence of false and indolent fastidiousness. I might repent the omission all my life: I would not then be guilty of it.

That evening I went to M. Vandenhuten's; but I had bent the bow and adjusted the shaft in vain; the string broke. I rang the bell at the great door (it was a large, handsone house in an expensive part of the town); a man-servant opened; I asked for M. Vandenhuten; M. Vandenhuten and family were all out of town—gone to Ostend—did not know when they would be back. I left my card, and retraced my steps.

CHAPTER XXII

A WEEK is gone; *le jour des noces* arrived; the marriage was solemnised at St. Jacques'; Mdlle. Zoraïde became Madame Pelet, *née* Reuter; and, in about an hour after this transformation, 'the happy pair,' as newspapers phrase it, were on their way to Paris; where, according to previous arrangement, the honeymoon was to be spent. The next day I quitted the pensionnat. Myself and my chattels (some books and clothes) were soon transferred to a modest lodging I had hired in a street not far off. In half an hour my clothes were arranged in a commode, my books on a shelf, and the 'flitting' was effected. I should not have been unhappy that day had not one pang tortured me—a longing to go to the Rue Notre Dame aux Neiges, resisted, yet irritated by an inward resolve to avoid that street till such time as the mist of doubt should clear from my prospects.

It was a sweet September evening—very mild, very still; I had nothing to do; at that hour I knew Frances would be equally released from occupation; I thought she might possibly be wishing for her master, I knew I wished for my pupil. Imagination began with her low whispers, infusing into my soul the soft tale of pleasures that might be.

'You will find her reading or writing,' said she; 'you can take your seat at her side; you need not startle her peace by undue excitement; you need not embarrass her manner by unusual action or language. Be as you always are; look over what she has written; listen while she reads; chide her, or quietly approve; you know the effect of either system; you know her smile when pleased, you know the play of her looks when roused; you have the secret of awakening what expression you will, and you can choose amongst that pleasant variety. With you she will sit silent as long as it suits you to talk alone; you can hold her under a potent spell; intelligent as she is, eloquent as she can be, you can seal her lips, and veil her bright countenance with diffidence; yet, you know, she is not all monotonous mildness; you have seen, with a sort of strange pleasure, revolt, scorn, austerity, bitterness, lay energetic claim to a place in her feelings and physiognomy; you know that few could rule her as you do; you know she might break, but never bend under the hand of Tyranny and Injustice, but Reason and Affection can guide her by a sign. Try their influence now. Go—they are not passions; you may handle them safely.'

'I will *not* go,' was my answer to the sweet temptress. 'A man is master of himself to a certain point, but not beyond it. Could I seek Frances to-night, could I sit with her alone in a quiet room, and address her only in the language of Reason and Affection?'

'No,' was the brief, fervent reply of that Love which had conquered and now controlled me.

Time seemed to stagnate; the sun would not go down; my watch ticked, but I thought the hands were paralyzed.

'What a hot evening!' I cried, throwing open the lattice; for, indeed, I had seldom felt so feverish. Hearing a step ascending the common stair, I wondered whether the 'locataire,' now mounting to his apartments, were as unsettled in mind and condition as I was, or whether he lived in the calm of certain resources, and in the freedom of unfettered feelings. What! was he coming in person to solve the problem hardly proposed in inaudible thought? He had actually knocked at the door—at *my* door; a smart prompt rap; and, almost before I could invite him in, he was over the threshold, and had closed the door behind him.

'And how are you?' asked an indifferent, quiet voice, in the English language; while my visitor, without any sort of bustle or introduction, put his hat on the table, and his gloves into his hat, and drawing the only armchair the room afforded a little forward, seated himself tranquilly therein.

'Can't you speak?' he inquired in a few moments, in a tone whose nonchalance seemed to intimate that it was much the same thing whether I answered or not. The fact is, I found it desirable to have recourse to my good friends 'les besicles'; not exactly to ascertain the identity of my visitor—for I already knew him, confound his impudence! but to see how he looked—to get a clear notion of his mien and countenance. I wiped the glasses very deliberately, and put them on quite as deliberately; adjusting them so as not to hurt the bridge of my nose, or get entangled in my short tufts of dun hair. I was sitting in the window-seat, with my back to the light, and I had him *vis-à-vis*; a position he would much rather have had reversed; for, at any time, he preferred scrutinising to being scrutinised. Yes, it was *he*, and no mistake, with his six feet of length arranged in a sitting attitude; with his dark travelling surtout with its velvet collar, his grey pantaloons, his black stock, and *his* face, the most original one Nature ever modelled, yet the least obtrusively so; not one feature that could be termed marked or odd, yet the effect of the whole unique. There is no use in attempting to describe what is indescribable. Being in no hurry to address him, I sat and stared at my ease.

'Oh, that's your game, is it?' said he at last. 'Well, we'll see which is soonest tired.'

And he slowly drew out a fine cigar-case, picked one to his taste, lit it, took a book from the shelf convenient to his hand, then leaning back, proceeded to smoke and read as tranquilly as if he had been in his own room, in Grove Street, X——shire, England. I knew he was capable of continuing in that attitude till midnight, if he conceived the whim, so I rose, and taking the book from his hand, I said, 'You did not ask for it, and you shall not have it.'

'It is silly and dull,' he observed, 'so I have not lost much;' then, the spell being broken, he went on: 'I thought you lived at Pelet's; I went there this afternoon, expecting to be starved to death by sitting in a boarding-school drawing-room, and they told me you were gone, had departed this morning; you had left your address behind you, though, which I wondered at; it was a more practical and sensible precaution than I should have imagined you capable of. Why did you leave?'

'Because M. Pelet has just married the lady whom you and Mr. Brown assigned to me as my wife.'

'Oh, indeed!' replied Hunsden, with a short laugh; 'so you've lost both your wife and your place?'

'Precisely so.'

I saw him give a quick, covert glance all round my room; he marked its narrow limits, its scanty furniture: in an instant he had comprehended the state of matters—had absolved me from the crime of prosperity. A curious effect this discovery wrought in his strange mind; I am morally certain that if he had found me installed in a handsome parlour, lounging on a soft couch, with a pretty, wealthy wife at my side, he would have hated me; a brief, cold, haughty visit would in such a case have been the extreme limit of his civilities, and never would he have come near me more, so long as the tide of fortune bore me smoothly on its surface; but the painted furniture, the bare walls, the cheerless solitude of my room relaxed his rigid pride, and I know not what softening change had taken place both in his voice and look ere he spoke again.

'You have got another place?'

'No.'

'You are in the way of getting one?'

'No.'

'That is bad; have you applied to Brown?'

'No, indeed.'

'You had better; he often has it in his power to give useful information in such matters.'

'He served me once very well; I have no claim on him, and am not in the humour to bother him again.'

'Oh, if you're bashful, and dread being intrusive, you need only commission me. I shall see him to-night; I can put in a word.'

'I beg you will not, Mr. Hunsden; I am in your debt already; you did me an important service when I was at X——; got me out of a den where I was dying: that service I have never repaid, and at present I decline positively adding another item to the account.'

'If the wind sits that way, I'm satisfied. I thought my unexampled generosity in turning you out of that accursed counting-house would be duly appreciated some day: "Cast your bread on the waters, and it shall be found after many days," say the Scriptures. Yes, that's right, lad—make much of me—I'm a nonpareil: there's nothing like me in the common herd. In the meantime, to put all humbug aside and talk sense for a few moments, you would be greatly the better of a situation, and what is more, you are a fool if you refuse to take one from any hand that offers it.'

'Very well, Mr. Hunsden; now you have settled that point, talk of something else. What news from X——?'

'I have not settled that point, or at least there is another to settle before we get to X——. Is this Miss Zénobie' ('Zoraïde,' interposed I)—'well, Zoraïde—is she really married to Pelet?'

'I tell you yes—and if you don't believe me, go and ask the curé of St. Jacques.'

'And your heart is broken?'

'I am not aware that it is; it feels all right—beats as usual.'

'Then your feelings are less superfine than I took them to be; you must be a coarse, callous character, to bear such a thwack without staggering under it.'

'Staggering under it? What the deuce is there to stagger under in the circumstance of a Belgian schoolmistress marrying a French schoolmaster? The progeny will doubtless be a strange hybrid race; but that's their look out—not mine.'

'He indulges in scurrilous jests, and the bride was his affianced one!'

'Who said so?'

'Brown.'

'I'll tell you what, Hunsden—Brown is an old gossip.'

'He is; but in the meantime, if his gossip be founded on less than fact—if you took no particular interest in Miss Zoraïde—why, O youthful pedagogue! did you leave your place in consequence of her becoming Madame Pelet?'

'Because—' I felt my face grow a little hot: 'because—in short, Mr. Hunsden, I decline answering any more questions,' and I plunged my hands deep in my breeches-pockets.

Hunsden triumphed: his eyes—his laugh announced victory.

'What the deuce are you laughing at, Mr. Hunsden?'

'At your exemplary composure. Well, lad, I'll not bore you; I see how it is: Zoraïde has jilted you—married some one richer, as any sensible woman would have done if she had had the chance.'

I made no reply—I let him think so, not feeling inclined to enter into an explanation of the real state of things, and as little to forge a false account; but it was not easy to blind Hunsden; my very silence, instead of convincing him that he had hit the truth, seemed to render him doubtful about it; he went on:—

'I suppose the affair has been conducted as such affairs always are amongst rational people: you offered her your youth and your talents—such as they are—in exchange for her position and money: I don't suppose you took appearance, or what is called *love*, into the account—for I understand she is older than you, and Brown says, rather sensible-looking than beautiful. She, having then no chance of making a better bargain, was at first inclined to come to terms with you, but Pelet—the head of a flourishing school

—stepped in with a higher bid; she accepted, and he has got her: a correct transaction—perfectly so—business-like and legitimate. And now we'll talk of something else.'

'Do,' said I, very glad to dismiss the topic, and especially glad to have baffled the sagacity of my cross-questioner—if, indeed, I had baffled it; for though his words now led away from the dangerous point, his eyes, keen and watchful, seemed still preoccupied with the former idea.

'You want to hear news from X——? And what interest can you have in X——? You left no friends there, for you made none. Nobody ever asks after you—neither man nor woman; and if I mention your name in company, the men look as if I had spoken of Prester John; and the women sneer covertly. Our X—— belles must have disliked you. How did you excite their displeasure?'

'I don't know. I seldom spoke to them—they were nothing to me. I considered them only as something to be glanced at from a distance; their dresses and faces were often pleasing enough to the eye: but I could not understand their conversation, nor even read their countenances. When I caught snatches of what they said, I could never make much of it; and the play of their lips and eyes did not help me at all.'

'That was your fault, not theirs. There are sensible, as well as handsome women in X——; women it is worth any man's while to talk to, and with whom I can talk with pleasure: but you had and have no pleasant address; there is nothing in you to induce a woman to be affable. I have remarked you sitting near the door in a room full of company, bent on hearing, not on speaking; on observing, not on entertaining; looking frigidly shy at the commencement of a party, confusingly vigilant about the middle, and insultingly weary towards the end. Is that the way, do you think, ever to communicate pleasure or excite interest? No; and if you are generally unpopular, it is because you deserve to be so.'

'Content!' I ejaculated.

'No, you are not content; you see beauty always turning its back on you: you are mortified, and then you sneer. I verily believe all that is desirable on earth—wealth, reputation, love—will for ever to you be the ripe grapes on the high trellis: you'll look up at them; they will tantalise in you the lust of the eye; but they are out of reach: you have not the address to fetch a ladder, and you'll go away calling them sour.'

Cutting as these words might have been under some circumstances, they drew no blood now. My life was changed; my experience had been varied since I left X——, but Hunsden could not know this; he had seen me only in the character of Mr. Crimsworth's clerk—a dependent amongst wealthy strangers, meeting disdain with a hard front, conscious of an unsocial and unattractive exterior, refusing to sue for notice which I was sure would be withheld, declining to evince an admiration which I knew would be scorned as worthless. He could not be aware that since then youth and loveliness had been to me everyday objects; that I had studied them at leisure and closely, and had seen the plain texture of truth under the embroidery of appearance; nor could he, keen-sighted as he was, penetrate into my heart, search my brain, and read my peculiar sympathies and antipathies; he had not known me long enough, or well enough, to perceive how low my feelings would ebb under some influences, powerful over most minds; how high, how fast they would flow under other influences, that perhaps acted with the more intense force on me because they acted on me alone. Neither could he suspect for an instant the history of my communications with Mdlle. Reuter; secret to him and to all others was the tale of her strange infatuation; her blandishments, her wiles had been seen but by me, and to me only were they known; but they had changed me, for they had proved that I *could* impress. A sweeter secret nestled deeper in my heart; one full of tenderness and as full of strength: it took the sting out of Hunsden's sarcasm; it kept me unbent by shame, and unstirred by wrath. But of all this I could say nothing—nothing decisive at least; uncertainty sealed my lips, and during the interval of silence by which alone I replied to Mr. Hunsden, I made up my mind to be for the present wholly misjudged by him, and misjudged I was; he thought he had been rather too hard upon me, and that I was crushed by the weight of his upbraidings; so to re-assure me he said, doubtless I should mend some day; I was only at the beginning of life yet; and since happily I was not quite without sense, every false step I made would be a good lesson.

Just then I turned my face a little to the light; the approach of twilight, and my position in the window-seat had, for the last ten minutes, prevented him from studying my countenance; as I moved, however, he caught an expression which he thus interpreted :—

'Confound it! How doggedly self-approving the lad looks! I thought he was fit to die with shame, and there he sits, grinning smiles, as good as to say, "Let the world wag as it will, I've the philosopher's stone in my waistcoat pocket, and the elixir of life in my cupboard; I'm independent of both Fate and Fortune!"'

'Hunsden—you spoke of grapes; I was thinking of a fruit I like better than your X—— hot-house grapes—an unique fruit growing wild, which I have marked as my own, and hope one day to gather and taste. It is of no use your offering me the draught of bitterness, or threatening me with death by thirst: I have the anticipation of sweetness on my palate; the hope of freshness on my lips; I can reject the unsavoury, and endure the exhausting.'

'For how long?'

'Till the next opportunity for effort; and as the prize of success will be a treasure after my own heart, I'll bring a bull's strength to the struggle.'

'Bad luck crushes bulls as easily as bullaces; and, I believe, the fury dogs you: you were born with a wooden spoon in your mouth, depend on it.'

'I believe you; and I mean to make my wooden spoon do the work of some people's silver ladles: grasped firmly, and handled nimbly, even a wooden spoon will shovel up broth.'

Hunsden rose: 'I see,' said he; 'I suppose you're one of those who develop best unwatched, and act best unaided—work your own way. Now I'll go.' And without another word, he was going; at the door he turned:—

'Crimsworth Hall is sold,' said he.

'Sold!' was my echo.

'Yes; you know, of course, that your brother failed three months ago?'

'What! Edward Crimsworth?'

'Precisely; and his wife went home to her father's; when affairs went awry, his temper sympathised with them; he used her ill: I told you he would be a tyrant to her some day; as to him——'

'Ay, as to him—what is become of him?'

'Nothing extraordinary—don't be alarmed; he put himself under the protection of the court, compounded with his creditors—tenpence in the pound; in six weeks set up again, coaxed back his wife, and is flourishing like a green bay-tree.'

'And Crimsworth Hall—was the furniture sold too?

'Everything—from the grand piano down to the rolling-pin.'

'And the contents of the oak dining-room—were they sold?'

'Of course; why should the sofas and chairs of that room be held more sacred than those of any other?'

'And the pictures?'

'What pictures? Crimsworth had no special collection that I know of—he did not profess to be an amateur.'

'There were two portraits, one on each side the mantelpiece; you cannot have forgotten them, Mr. Hunsden; you once noticed that of the lady——'

'Oh, I know! the thin-faced gentlewoman with a shawl put on like drapery.—Why, as a matter of course, it would be sold among the other things. If you had been rich, you might have bought it, for I remember you said it represented your mother: you see what it is to be without a sou.'

I did. 'But surely,' I thought to myself, 'I shall not always be so poverty-stricken; I may one day buy it back yet.'—'Who purchased it, do you know?' I asked.

'How is it likely? I never inquired who purchased anything; there spoke the unpractical man—to imagine all the world is interested in what interests himself! Now, good-night—I'm off for Germany to-morrow morning; I shall be back here in six weeks, and possibly I may call and see you again; I wonder whether you'll be still out of place!' he laughed, as mockingly, as heartlessly as Mephistopheles, and so laughing, vanished.

Some people, however indifferent they may become after a considerable space of absence, always contrive to leave a pleasant impression just at parting; not so Hunsden; a conference with him affected one like a draught of Peruvian bark; it seemed a concentration of the specially harsh, stringent, bitter; whether, like bark, it invigorated, I scarcely knew.

A ruffled mind makes a restless pillow; I slept little on the night after this interview; towards morning I began to doze, but hardly had my slumber become sleep, when I was aroused from it by hearing a noise in my sitting-room, to which my bed-room adjoined—a step, and a shoving of furniture; the movement lasted barely two minutes; with the closing of the door it ceased. I listened; not a mouse stirred; perhaps I had dreamt it, perhaps a *locataire* had made a mistake, and entered my apartment instead of his own. It was yet but five o'clock; neither I nor the day were wide awake; I turned, and was soon unconscious. When I did rise, about two hours later, I had forgotten the circumstance; the first thing I saw, however, on quitting my chamber, recalled it; just pushed in at the door of my sitting-room, and still standing on end, was a wooden packing-case—a rough deal affair, wide but shallow; a porter had doubtless shoved it forward, but seeing no occupant of the room, had left it at the entrance.

'That is none of mine,' thought I, approaching; 'it must be meant for somebody else.' I stooped to examine the address:—

'Wm. Crimsworth, Esq., No —, —— St., Brussels.'

I was puzzled, but concluding that the best way to obtain information was to ask within, I cut the cords and opened the case. Green baize enveloped its contents, sewn carefully at the sides; I ripped the packthread with my penknife, and still as the seam gave way glimpses of gilding appeared through the widening interstices. Boards and baize being at length removed, I lifted from the case a large picture, in a magnificent frame; leaning it against a chair, in a position where the light from the window fell favourably upon it, I stepped back—already I had mounted my spectacles. A portrait-painter's sky (the most sombre and threatening of welkins), and distant trees of a conventional depth of hue, raised in full relief a pale, pensive-looking female face, shadowed with soft dark hair, almost blending with the equally dark clouds; large, solemn eyes looked reflectively into mine; a thin cheek rested on a delicate little hand; a shawl, artistically draped, half hid, half showed a slight figure. A listener (had there been one) might have heard me, after ten minutes' silent gazing, utter the word 'Mother!' I might have said more—but with me the first word uttered aloud in soliloquy rouses consciousness; it reminds me that only crazy people talk to themselves, and then I think out my monologue, instead of speaking it. I had thought a long while, and a long while had contemplated the intelligence, the sweetness, and—alas! the sadness also of those fine grey eyes, the mental power of that forehead, and the rare sensibility of that serious mouth, when my glance, travelling downwards, fell on a narrow billet, stuck in the corner of the picture, between the frame and the canvas. Then I first asked, 'Who sent this picture? Who thought of me, saved it out of the wreck of Crimsworth Hall, and now commits it to the care of its natural keeper?' I took the note from its niche; thus it spoke:—

'There is a sort of stupid pleasure in giving a child sweets, a fool his bells, a dog a bone. You are repaid by seeing the child besmear his face with sugar; by witnessing how the fool's ecstasy makes a greater fool of him than ever; by watching the dog's nature come out over his bone. In giving William Crimsworth his mother's picture, I give him sweets, bells, and bone all in one; what grieves me is, that I cannot behold the result; I would have added five shillings more to my bid if the auctioneer could only have promised me that pleasure. 'H. Y. H.

'P.S.—You said last night you positively declined adding another item to your account with me; don't you think I've saved you that trouble?'

I muffled the picture in its green baize covering, restored it to the case, and having transported the whole concern to my bedroom, put it out of sight under my bed. My pleasure was now poisoned by pungent pain; I determined to look no more till I could look at my ease. If Hunsden had come in at that moment, I should have said to him, 'I owe you nothing, Hunsden—not a fraction of a farthing: you have paid yourself in taunts.'

Too anxious to remain any longer quiescent, I had no sooner breakfasted than I repaired once more to M. Vandenhuten's, scarcely hoping to find him at home; for a week had barely elapsed since my first call: but fancying I might be able to glean information as to the time when his return was expected. A better result awaited me than I had anticipated, for though the family were yet at Ostend, M. Vandenhuten had come over to Brussels on business for the day. He received me with the quiet kindness of a sincere though not excitable man. I had not sat five minutes alone with him in his bureau, before I became aware of a sense of ease in his presence, such as I rarely experienced with strangers. I was surprised at my own composure, for, after all, I had come on business to me exceedingly painful—that of soliciting a favour. I asked on what basis the calm rested—I feared it might be deceptive. Ere long I caught a glimpse of the ground, and at once I felt assured of its solidity; I knew where I was.

M. Vandenhuten was rich, respected, and influential; I, poor, despised, and powerless; so we stood to the world at large as members of the world's society; but to each other, as a pair of human beings, our positions were reversed. The Dutchman (he was not Flamand, but pure Hollandais) was slow, cool, of rather dense intelligence, though sound and accurate judgment; the Englishman far more nervous, active, quicker both to plan and to practise, to conceive and to realise. The Dutchman was benevolent, the Englishman susceptible; in short, our characters dovetailed, but my mind having more fire and action than his instinctively assumed and kept the predominance.

This point settled, and my position well ascertained, I addressed him on the subject of my affairs with that genuine frankness which full confidence can alone inspire. It was a pleasure to him to be so appealed to; he thanked me for giving him this opportunity of using a little exertion in my behalf. I went on to explain to him that my wish was not so much to be helped, as to be put into the way of helping myself; of him I did not want exertion—that was to be my part—but only information and recommendation. Soon after I rose to go. He held out his hand at parting—an action of greater significance with foreigners than with Englishmen. As I exchanged a smile with him, I thought the benevolence of his truthful face was better than the intelligence of my own. Characters of my order experience a balm-like solace in the contact of such souls as animated the honest breast of Victor Vandenhuten.

The next fortnight was a period of many alternations; my existence during its lapse resembled a sky of one of those autumnal nights which are specially haunted by meteors and falling stars. Hopes and fears, expectations and disappointments, descended in glancing showers from zenith to horizon; but all were transient, and darkness followed swift each vanishing apparition. M. Vandenhuten aided me faithfully; he set me on the track of several places, and himself made efforts to secure them for me; but for a long time solicitation and recommendation were vain—the door either shut in my face when I was about to walk in, or another candidate, entering before me, rendered my further advance useless. Feverish and roused, no disappointment arrested me; defeat following fast on defeat served as stimulants to will. I forgot fastidiousness, conquered reserve, thrust pride from me: I asked, I persevered, I remonstrated, I dunned. It is so that openings are forced into the guarded circle where Fortune sits dealing favours round. My perseverance made me known; my importunity made me remarked. I was inquired about; my former pupils' parents, gathering the reports of their children, heard me spoken of as talented, and they echoed the word: the sound, bandied about at random, came at last to ears which, but for its universality, it might never have reached; and at the very crisis when I had tried my last effort and knew not what to do, Fortune looked in at me one morning, as I sat in drear and almost desperate deliberation on my bedstead, nodded with the familiarity of an old acquaintance—though God knows I had never met her before—and threw a prize into my lap.

In the second week of October, 18—, I got the appointment of English professor to all the classes of —— College, Brussels, with a salary of three thousand francs per annum; and the certainty of being able, by dint of the reputation and publicity accompanying the position, to make as much more by private lessons. The official notice, which communicated this information, mentioned also that it was the strong recommendation of M. Vandenhuten, négociant, which had turned the scale of choice in my favour.

No sooner had I read the announcement than I hurried to M. Vandenhuten's bureau, pushed the document under his nose, and when he had perused it, took both his hands, and thanked him with unrestrained vivacity. My vivid words and emphatic gesture moved his Dutch calm to unwonted sensation. He said he was happy—glad to have served me; but he had done nothing meriting such thanks. He had not laid out a centime—only scratched a few words on a sheet of paper.

Again I repeated to him—'You have made me quite happy, and in a way that suits me; I do not feel an obligation irksome, conferred by your kind hand; I do not feel disposed to shun you because you have done me a favour; from this day you must consent to admit me to your intimate acquaintance, for I shall hereafter recur again and again to the pleasure of your society.'

'Ainsi soit-il,' was the reply, accompanied by a smile of benignant content. I went away with its sunshine in my heart.

CHAPTER XXIII

It was two o'clock when I returned to my lodgings; my dinner, just brought in from a neighbouring hotel, smoked on the table; I sat down, thinking to eat—had the plate been heaped with potsherds and broken glass, instead of boiled beef and haricots, I could not have made a more signal failure: appetite had forsaken me. Impatient of seeing food which I could not taste, I put it all aside into a cupboard, and then demanded, 'What shall I do till evening?' for before six P.M. it would be vain to seek the Rue Notre Dame aux Neiges; its inhabitant (for me it had but one) was detained by her vocation elsewhere. I walked in the streets of Brussels, and I walked in my own room from two o'clock till six; never once in that space of time did I sit down. I was in my chamber when the last-named hour struck; I had just bathed my face and feverish hands, and was standing near the glass; my cheek was crimson, my eye was flame, still all my features looked quite settled and calm. Descending swiftly the stair and stepping out, I was glad to see Twilight drawing on in clouds; such shade was to me like a grateful screen, and the chill of latter Autumn, breathing in a fitful wind from the north-west, met me as a refreshing coolness. Still I saw it was cold to others, for the women I passed were wrapped in shawls, and the men had their coats buttoned close.

When are we quite happy? Was I so then? No; an urgent and growing dread worried my nerves, and had worried them since the first moment good tidings had reached me. How was Frances? It was ten weeks since I had seen her, six since I had heard from her, or of her. I had answered her letter by a brief note, friendly but calm, in which no mention of continued correspondence or further visits was made. At that hour my bark hung on the topmost curl of a wave of fate, and I knew not on what shoal the onward rush of the billow might hurl it; I would not then attach her destiny to mine by the slightest thread; if doomed to split on the rock, or run aground on the sand-bank, I was resolved no other vessel should share my disaster: but six weeks was a long time; and could it be that she was still well and doing well? Were not all sages agreed in declaring that happiness finds no climax on earth? Dared I think that but half a street now divided me from the full cup of contentment—the draught drawn from waters said to flow only in heaven?

I was at the door; I entered the quiet house; I mounted the stairs; the lobby was void and still, all the doors closed; I looked for the neat green mat; it lay duly in its place.

'Signal of hope;' I said, and advanced. 'But I will be a little calmer; I am not going to rush in, and get up a scene directly.' Forcibly staying my eager step, I paused on the mat.

'What an absolute hush! Is she in? Is anybody in?' I demanded to myself. A little tinkle, as of cinders falling from a grate, replied; a movement—a fire was gently stirred; and the slight rustle of life continuing, a step paced equably backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, in the apartment. Fascinated, I stood, more fixedly fascinated when a voice rewarded the attention of my strained ear—so low, so self-addressed, I never fancied the speaker otherwise than alone; solitude might speak thus in a desert, or in the hall of a forsaken house:—

'And ne'er but once, my son,' he said,
  'Was yon dark cavern trod;
In persecution's iron days,
  When the land was left by God.

From Bewley's bog with slaughter red,
A wanderer hither drew;
And oft he stopp'd and turn'd his head,
As by fits the night-winds blew.
For trampling round by Cheviot-edge
Were heard the troopers keen;
And frequent from the Whitelaw ridge
The death-shot flash'd between,' *&c. &c.*

The old Scotch ballad was partly recited, then dropt; a pause ensued; then another strain followed in French, of which the purport, translated, ran as follows:—

I gave, at first, attention close;
Then interest warm ensued;
From interest, as improvement rose,
Succeeded gratitude.

Obedience was no effort soon,
And labour was no pain;
If tired, a word, a glance alone
Would give me strength again.

From others of the studious band,
Ere long he singled me;
But only by more close demand,
And sterner urgency.

The task he from another took,
From me he did reject;
He would no slight omission brook,
And suffer no defect.

If my companions went astray,
He scarce their wanderings blam'd;
If I but falter'd in the way,
His anger fiercely flam'd.

Something stirred in an adjoining chamber; it would not do to be surprised eavesdropping; I tapped hastily, and as hastily entered. Frances was just before me; she had been walking slowly in her room, and her step was checked by my advent: Twilight only was with her, and tranquil, ruddy Firelight; to these sisters, the Bright and the Dark, she had been speaking, ere I entered, in poetry. Sir Walter Scott's voice, to her a foreign, far-off sound, a mountain echo, had uttered itself in the first stanzas; the second, I thought, from the style and the substance, was the language of her own heart. Her face was grave, its expression concentrated; she bent on me an unsmiling eye—an eye just returning from abstraction, just awaking from dreams: well arranged was her simple attire, smooth her dark hair, orderly her tranquil room; but what—with her thoughtful look, her serious self-reliance, her bent to meditation and haply inspiration—what had she to do with love? 'Nothing,' was the answer of her own sad, though gentle countenance; it seemed to say, 'I must cultivate fortitude and cling to poetry; one is to be my support and the other my solace through life. Human affections do not bloom, nor do human passions glow for me.' Other women have such thoughts. Frances, had she been as desolate as she deemed, would not have been worse off than thousands of her sex. Look at the rigid and formal race of old maids—the race whom all despise; they have fed themselves, from youth upwards, on maxims of resignation and endurance. Many of them get ossified with the dry diet; self-control is so continually their thought, so perpetually their object, that at last it absorbs the softer and more agreeable qualities of their nature, and they die mere models of austerity, fashioned out of a little parchment and much bone. Anatomists will tell you that there is a heart in the withered old maid's carcass—the same as in that of any cherished wife or proud mother in the land. Can this be so? I really don't know; but feel inclined to doubt it.

I came forward, bade Frances 'good-evening,' and took my seat. The chair I had chosen was one she had probably just left; it stood by a little table where were her open desk and papers. I know not whether she had fully recognised me at first, but she did so now; and in a voice, soft but quiet, she returned my greeting. I had shown no eagerness; she took her cue from me, and evinced no surprise. We met as we had always met, as master and pupil—nothing more.

I proceeded to handle the papers; Frances, observant and serviceable, stepped into an inner room, brought a candle, lit it, placed it by me; then drew the curtain over the lattice, and having added a little fresh fuel to the already bright fire, she drew a second chair to the table, and sat down at my right hand, a little removed. The paper on the top was a translation of some grave French author into English, but underneath lay a sheet with stanzas; on this I laid hands. Frances half rose, made a movement to recover the captured spoil, saying, that was nothing—a mere copy of verses. I put by resistance with the decision I knew she never long opposed; but on this occasion her fingers had fastened on the paper. I had quietly to unloose them; their hold dissolved to my touch; her hand shrunk away; my own would fain have followed it, but for the present I forbade such impulse. The first page of the sheet was occupied with the lines I had overheard; the sequel was not exactly the writer's own experience, but a composition by portions of that experience suggested. Thus, while egotism was avoided, the fancy was exercised, and the heart satisfied. I translate as before, and my translation is nearly literal; it continued thus:—

When sickness stayed awhile my course,
  He seem'd impatient still,
Because his pupil's flagging force
  Could not obey his will.

One day when summoned to the bed
  Where pain and I did strive,
I heard him, as he bent his head,
  Say, 'God, she *must* revive!'

I felt his hand, with gentle stress,
  A moment laid on mine,
And wished to mark my consciousness
  By some responsive sign.

But pow'rless then to speak or move,
  I only felt, within,
The sense of Hope, the strength of Love,
  Their healing work begin.

And as he from the room withdrew,
My heart his steps pursued;
I long'd to prove, by efforts new,
My speechless gratitude.

When once again I took my place,
Long vacant, in the class,
Th' unfrequent smile across his face
Did for one moment pass.

The lessons done; the signal made
Of glad release and play,
He, as he passed, an instant stay'd,
One kindly word to say.

'Jane, till to-morrow you are free
From tedious task and rule;
This afternoon I must not see
That yet pale face in school.

'Seek in the garden-shades a seat,
Far from the playground din;
The sun is warm, the air is sweet:
Stay till I call you in.'

A long and pleasant afternoon
I passed in those green bowers;
All silent, tranquil, and alone
With birds, and bees, and flowers.

Yet, when my master's voice I heard
Call, from the window, 'Jane!'
I entered, joyful, at the word,
The busy house again.

He, in the hall, paced up and down;
He paused as I passed by;
His forehead stern relaxed its frown;
He raised his deep-set eye.

'Not quite so pale,' he murmured low.
'Now, Jane, go rest awhile.'
And as I smiled, his smoothened brow
Returned as glad a smile.

My perfect health restored, he took
His mien austere again;
And, as before, he would not brook
The slightest fault from Jane.

The longest task, the hardest theme
Fell to my share as erst,
And still I toiled to place my name
In every study first.

He yet begrudged and stinted praise,
But I had learnt to read
The secret meaning of his face,
And that was my best meed.

Even when his hasty temper spoke
In tones that sorrow stirred,
My grief was lulled as soon as woke
By some relenting word.

And when he lent some precious book,
Or gave some fragrant flower,
I did not quail to Envy's look,
Upheld by Pleasure's power.

At last our school ranks took their ground
The hard-fought field I won;
The prize, a laurel-wreath, was bound
My throbbing forehead on.

Low at my master's knee I bent,
The offered crown to meet;
Its green leaves through my temples sent
A thrill as wild as sweet.

The strong pulse of Ambition struck
In every vein I owned;
At the same instant, bleeding broke
A secret, inward wound.

The hour of triumph was to me
The hour of sorrow sore;
A day hence I must cross the sea,
Ne'er to recross it more.

An hour hence, in my master's room,
  I with him sat alone,
And told him what a dreary gloom
  O'er joy had parting thrown.

He little said; the time was brief,
  The ship was soon to sail,
And while I sobbed in bitter grief,
  My master but looked pale.

They called in haste; he bade me go,
  Then snatched me back again;
He held me fast and murmured low,
  'Why will they part us, Jane?

'Were you not happy in my care?
  Did I not faithful prove?
Will others to my darling bear
  As true, as deep a love?

'O God, watch o'er my foster child!
  O guard her gentle head!
When winds are high and tempests wild
  Protection round her spread!

'They call again; leave then my breast;
  Quit thy true shelter, Jane;
But when deceived, repulsed, opprest,
  Come home to me again!'

I read—then dreamily made marks on the margin with my pencil; thinking all the while of other things; thinking that 'Jane' was now at my side; no child, but a girl of nineteen; and she might be mine, so my heart affirmed; Poverty's curse was taken off me; Envy and Jealousy were far away, and unapprised of this our quiet meeting; the frost of the Master's manner might melt; I felt the thaw coming fast, whether I would or not; no further need for the eye to practise a hard look, for the brow to compress its expanse into a stern fold: it was now permitted to suffer the outward revelation of the inward glow—to seek, demand, elicit an answering ardour. While musing thus, I thought that the grass on Hermon never drank the fresh dews of sunset more gratefully than my feelings drank the bliss of this hour.

Frances rose, as if restless; she passed before me to stir the fire, which did not want stirring; she lifted and put down the little ornaments on the mantelpiece; her dress waved within a yard of me; slight, straight, and elegant, she stood erect on the hearth.

There are impulses we can control; but there are others which control us, because they attain us with a tiger-leap, and are our masters ere we have seen them. Perhaps, though, such impulses are seldom altogether bad; perhaps Reason, by a process as brief as quiet, a process that is finished ere felt, has ascertained the sanity of the deed. Instinct meditates, and feels justified in remaining passive while it is performed. I know I did not reason, I did not plan or intend, yet, whereas one moment I was sitting solus on the chair near the table, the next, I held Frances on my knee, placed there with sharpness and decision, and retained with exceeding tenacity.

'Monsieur!' cried Frances, and was still: not another word escaped her lips; sorely confounded she seemed during the lapse of the first few moments; but the amazement soon subsided; terror did not succeed, nor fury: after all, she was only a little nearer than she had ever been before, to one she habitually respected and trusted; embarrassment might have impelled her to contend, but self-respect checked resistance where resistance was useless.

'Frances, how much regard have you for me?' was my demand. No answer; the situation was yet too new and surprising to permit speech. On this consideration, I compelled myself for some seconds to tolerate her silence, though impatient of it: presently, I repeated the same question—probably, not in the calmest of tones; she looked at me; my face, doubtless, was no model of composure, my eyes no still wells of tranquillity.

'Do speak,' I urged; and a very low, hurried, yet still arch voice said—'Monsieur, vous me faites du mal; de grâce lâchez un peu ma main droite.'

In truth I became aware that I was holding the said 'main droite' in a somewhat ruthless grasp: I did as desired; and, for the third time, asked more gently—'Frances, how much regard have you for me?'

'Mon maître, j'en ai beaucoup,' was the truthful rejoinder.

'Frances, have you enough to give yourself to me as my wife?—to accept me as your husband?'

I felt the agitation of the heart, I saw 'the purple light of love' cast its glowing reflection on cheeks, temples, neck; I desired to consult the eye, but sheltering lash and lid forbade.

'Monsieur,' said the soft voice at last,—'Monsieur désire savoir si je consens—si—enfin, si je veux me marier avec lui?'

'Justement.'

'Monsieur sera-t-il aussi bon mari qu'il a été bon maître?'

'I will try, Frances.'

A pause; then with a new, yet still subdued inflexion of the voice—an inflexion which provoked while it pleased me—accompanied, too, by a 'sourire à la fois fin et timide' in perfect harmony with the tone:—'C'est à dire, Monsieur sera toujours un peu entêté, exigeant, volontaire——?'

'Have I been so, Frances?'

'Mais oui; vous le savez bien.'

'Have I been nothing else?'

'Mais oui; vous avez été mon meilleur ami.'

'And what, Frances, are you to me?'

'Votre dévouée élève, qui vous aime de tout son cœur.'

'Will my pupil consent to pass her life with me? Speak English now, Frances.'

Some moments were taken for reflection; the answer, pronounced slowly, ran thus:—

'You have always made me happy; I like to hear you speak; I like to see you; I like to be near you; I believe you are very good, and very superior; I know you are stern to those who are careless and idle, but you are kind, very kind to the attentive and industrious, even if they are not clever. Master, I should be *glad* to live with you always;' and she made a sort of movement, as if she would have clung to me, but restraining herself she only added with earnest emphasis—'Master, I consent to pass my life with you.'

'Very well, Frances.'

I drew her a little nearer to my heart; I took a first kiss from her lips, thereby sealing the compact, now framed between us; afterwards she and I were silent, nor was our silence brief. Frances' thoughts, during this interval, I know not, nor did I attempt to guess them; I was not occupied in searching her countenance, nor in otherwise troubling her composure. The peace I felt, I wished her to feel; my arm, it is true, still detained her; but with a restraint that was gentle enough, so long as no opposition tightened it. My gaze was on the red fire; my heart was measuring its own content; it sounded and sounded, and found the depth fathomless.

'Monsieur,' at last said my quiet companion, as stirless in her happiness as a mouse in its terror. Even now in speaking she scarcely lifted her head.

'Well, Frances?' I like unexaggerated intercourse; it is not my way to overpower with amorous epithets, any more than to worry with selfishly importunate caresses.

'Monsieur est raisonnable, n'est-ce pas?'

'Yes; especially when I am requested to be so in English: but why do you ask me? You see nothing vehement or obtrusive in my manner; am I not tranquil enough?'

'Ce n'est pas cela—' began Frances.

'English!' I reminded her.

'Well, Monsieur, I wished merely to say, that I should like, of course, to retain my employment of teaching. You will teach still, I suppose, Monsieur?'

'Oh, yes! It is all I have to depend on.'

'Bon!—I mean good. Thus we shall have both the same profession. I like that; and my efforts to get on will be as unrestrained as yours—will they not, Monsieur?'

'You are laying plans to be independent of me,' said I.

'Yes, Monsieur; I must be no incumbrance to you—no burden in any way.'

'But, Frances, I have not yet told you what my prospects are. I have left M. Pelet's; and after nearly a month's seeking, I have got another place, with a salary of three thousand francs a year, which I can easily double by a little additional exertion. Thus you see it would be useless for you to fag yourself by going out to give lessons; on six thousand francs you and I can live, and live well.'

Frances seemed to consider. There is something flattering to man's strength, something consonant to his honourable pride, in the idea of becoming the providence of what he loves—feeding and clothing it, as God does the lilies of the field. So, to decide her resolution, I went on:—

'Life has been painful and laborious enough to you so far, Frances; you require complete rest; your twelve hundred francs would not form a very important addition to our income, and what sacrifice of comfort to earn it! Relinquish your labours: you must be weary, and let me have the happiness of giving you rest.'

I am not sure whether Frances had accorded due attention to my harangue; instead of answering me with her usual respectful promptitude, she only sighed and said,—'How rich you are, Monsieur!' and then she stirred uneasy in my arms. 'Three thousand francs!' she murmured, 'while I get only twelve hundred!' She went on faster. 'However, it must be so for the present; and, Monsieur, were you not saying something about my giving up my place? Oh, no! I shall hold it fast;' and her little fingers emphatically tightened on mine. 'Think of my marrying you to be kept by you, Monsieur! I could not do it; and how dull my days would be! You would be away teaching in close, noisy schoolrooms, from morning till evening, and I should be lingering at home, unemployed and solitary; I should get depressed and sullen, and you would soon tire of me.'

'Frances, you could read and study—two things you like so well.'

'Monsieur, I could not; I like a contemplative life, but I like an active life better; I must act in some way, and act with you. I have taken notice, Monsieur, that people who are only in each other's company for amusement, never really like each other so well, or esteem each other so highly, as those who work together, and perhaps suffer together.'

'You speak God's truth,' said I at last, 'and you shall have your own way, for it is the best way. Now, as a reward for such ready consent, give me a voluntary kiss.'

After some hesitation, natural to a novice in the art of kissing, she brought her lips into very shy and gentle contact with my forehead; I took the small gift as a loan, and repaid it promptly, and with generous interest.

I know not whether Frances was really much altered since the time I first saw her; but, as I looked at her now, I felt that she was singularly changed for me; the sad eye, the pale cheek, the dejected and joyless countenance I remembered as her early attributes, were quite gone, and now I saw a face dressed in graces; smile, dimple, and rosy tint, rounded its contours and brightened its hues. I had been accustomed to nurse a flattering idea that my strong attachment to her proved some particular perspicacity in my nature; she was not handsome, she was not rich, she was not even accomplished, yet was she my life's treasure; I must then be a man of peculiar discernment. To-night my eyes opened on the mistake I had made; I began to suspect that it was only my tastes which were unique, not my power of discovering and appreciating the superiority of moral worth over physical charms. For me Frances had physical charms: in her there was no deformity to get over; none of those prominent defects of eyes, teeth, complexion, shape, which hold at bay the admiration of the boldest male champions of intellect (for women can love a downright ugly man if he be but talented); had she been either 'édentée, myope, rugueuse, ou bossue,' my feelings towards her might still have been kindly, but they could never have been impassioned; I had affection for the poor little misshapen Sylvie, but for her I could never have had love. It is true Frances' mental points had been the first to interest me, and they still retained the strongest hold on my preference; but I liked the graces of her person too. I derived a pleasure, purely material, from contemplating the clearness of her brown eyes, the fairness of her fine skin, the purity of her well-set teeth, the proportion of her delicate form; and that pleasure I could ill have dispensed with. It appeared, then, that I too was a sensualist, in my temperate and fastidious way.

Now, reader, during the last two pages I have been giving you honey fresh from flowers, but you must not live entirely on food so luscious; taste then a little gall—just a drop, by way of change.

At a somewhat late hour I returned to my lodgings: having temporarily forgotten that man had any such coarse cares as those of eating and drinking, I went to bed fasting. I had been excited and in action all day, and had tasted no food since eight that morning; besides, for a fortnight past, I had known no rest either of body or mind; the last few hours had been a sweet delirium, it would not subside now, and till long after midnight broke with troubled ecstasy the rest I so much needed. At last I dozed, but not for long; it was yet quite dark when I awoke, and my waking was like that of Job when a spirit passed before his face, and like him, 'the hair of my flesh stood up.' I might continue the parallel, for in truth, though I saw nothing, yet 'a thing was secretly brought unto me, and mine ear received a little thereof; there was silence, and I heard a voice' saying—'In the midst of life we are in death.'

That sound, and the sensation of chill anguish accompanying it, many would have regarded as supernatural; but I recognised it at once as the effect of reaction. Man is ever clogged with his mortality, and it was my mortal nature which now faltered and plained; my nerves, which jarred and gave a false sound, because the soul, of late rushing headlong to an aim, had overstrained the body's comparative weakness. A horror of great darkness fell upon me; I felt my chamber invaded by one I had known formerly, but had thought for ever departed. I was temporarily a prey to hypochondria.

She had been my acquaintance, nay, my guest, once before in boyhood; I had entertained her at bed and board for a year; for that space of time I had her to myself in secret; she lay with me, she ate with me, she walked out with me, showing me nooks in woods, hollows in hills, where we could sit together, and where she could drop her drear veil over me, and so hide sky and sun, grass and green tree; taking me entirely to her death-cold bosom, and holding me with arms of bone. What tales she would tell me at such hours! What songs she would recite in my ears! How she would discourse to me of her own country—the grave—and again and again promise to conduct me there ere long; and drawing me to the very brink of a black, sullen river, show me, on the other side, shores unequal with mound, monument, and tablet, standing up in a glimmer more hoary than moonlight. 'Necropolis!' she would whisper, pointing to the pale piles, and add, 'It contains a mansion prepared for you.'

But my boyhood was lonely, parentless; uncheered by brother or sister; and there was no marvel that, just as I rose to youth, a sorceress, finding me lost in vague mental wanderings, with many affections and few objects, glowing aspirations and gloomy prospects, strong desires and slender hopes, should lift up her illusive lamp to me in the distance, and lure me to her vaulted home of horrors. No wonder her spells *then* had power; but *now*, when my course was widening, my prospect brightening; when my affections had found a rest; when my desires, folding wings, weary with long flight, had just alighted on the very lap of fruition, and nestled there warm, content, under the caress of a soft hand—why did hypochondria accost me now?

I repulsed her as one would a dreaded and ghastly concubine coming to embitter a husband's heart toward his young bride; in vain; she kept her sway over me for that night and the next day, and eight succeeding days. Afterwards, my spirits began slowly to recover their tone; my appetite returned, and in a fortnight I was well. I had gone about as usual all the time, and had said nothing to anybody of what I felt; but I was glad when the evil spirit departed from me, and I could again seek Frances, and sit at her side freed from the dreadful tyranny of my demon.

CHAPTER XXIV

One fine frosty Sunday in November, Frances and I took a long walk; we made the tour of the city by the Boulevards; and, afterwards, Frances being a little tired, we sat down on one of those wayside seats placed under the trees, at intervals, for the accommodation of the weary. Frances was telling me about Switzerland; the subject animated her; and I was just thinking that her eyes spoke full as eloquently as her tongue, when she stopped and remarked—'Monsieur, there is a gentleman who knows you.'

I looked up; three fashionably dressed men were just then passing—Englishmen, I knew by their air and gait as well as by their features; in the tallest of the trio I at once recognised Mr. Hunsden; he was in the act of lifting his hat to Frances; afterwards, he made a grimace at me and passed on.

'Who is he?'

'A person I knew in England.'

'Why did he bow to me? He does not know me.'

'Yes, he does know you, in his way.'

'How, Monsieur?' (She still called me 'Monsieur'; I could not persuade her to adopt any more familiar term.)

'Did you not read the expression of his eyes?'

'Of his eyes? No. What did they say?'

'To you they said, "How do you do, Wilhelmina Crimsworth?" To me, "So you have found your counterpart at last; there she sits, the female of your kind!"'

'Monsieur, you could not read all that in his eyes; he was so soon gone.'

'I read that and more, Frances; I read that he will probably call on me this evening, or on some future occasion shortly; and I have no doubt he will insist on being introduced to you; shall I bring him to your rooms?'

'If you please, Monsieur—I have no objection; I think, indeed, I should rather like to see him nearer; he looks so original.'

As I had anticipated, Mr. Hunsden came that evening. The first thing he said was:—'You need not begin boasting, Monsieur le Professeur; I know about your appointment to ——College, and all that; Brown has told me.' Then he intimated that he had returned from Germany but a day or two since; afterwards, he abruptly demanded whether that was Madame Pelet-Reuter with whom he had seen me on the Boulevards. I was going to utter a rather emphatic negative, but on second thoughts I checked myself, and, seeming to assent, asked what he thought of her?

'As to her, I'll come to that directly; but first I've a word for you. I see you are a scoundrel; you've no business to be promenading about with another man's wife. I thought you had sounder sense than to get mixed up in foreign hodgepodge of this sort.'

'But the lady?'

'She's too good for you evidently; she is like you, but something better than you—no beauty, though; yet when she rose (for I looked back to see you both walk away) I thought her figure and carriage good. These foreigners understand grace. What the devil has she done with Pelet? She has not been married to him three months—he must be a spoon!'

I would not let the mistake go too far; I did not like it much.

'Pelet? How your head runs on Mons. and Madame Pelet! You are always talking about them. I wish to the gods you had wed Mdlle. Zoraïde yourself?'

'Was that young gentlewoman not Mdlle. Zoraïde?'

'No; nor Madame Zoraïde either.'

'Why did you tell a lie, then?'

'I told no lie; but you are in such a hurry. She is a pupil of mine—a Swiss girl.'

'And of course you are going to be married to her? Don't deny that.'

'Married! I think I shall—if Fate spares us both ten weeks longer. That is my little wild strawberry, Hunsden, whose sweetness made me careless of your hot-house grapes.'

'Stop! No boasting—no heroics; I won't bear them. What is she? To what *caste* does she belong?'

I smiled. Hunsden unconsciously laid stress on the word *caste*, and, in fact, republican lord-hater as he was, Hunsden was as proud of his old ——shire blood, of his descent and family standing, respectable and respected through long generations back, as any peer in the realm of his Norman race and Conquest-dated title. Hunsden would as little have thought of taking a wife from a *caste* inferior to his own, as a Stanley would think of mating with a Cobden. I enjoyed the surprise I should give; I enjoyed the triumph of my practice over his theory; and leaning over the table, and uttering the words slowly but with repressed glee, I said concisely—'She is a lace-mender.'

Hunsden examined me. He did not *say* he was surprised, but surprised he was; he had his own notions of good breeding. I saw he suspected I was going to take some very rash step; but repressing declamation or remonstrance, he only answered—'Well, you are the best judge of your own affairs. A lace-mender may make a good wife as well as a lady; but of course you have taken care to ascertain thoroughly that since she has not education, fortune or station, she is well furnished with such natural qualities as you think most likely to conduce to your happiness. Has she many relations?'

'None in Brussels.'

'That is better. Relations are often the real evil in such cases. I cannot but think that a train of inferior connections would have been a bore to you to your life's end.'

After sitting in silence a little while longer, Hunsden rose, and was quietly bidding me good-evening; the polite, considerate manner in which he offered me his hand (a thing he had never done before,) convinced me that he thought I had made a terrible fool of myself; and that, ruined and thrown away as I was, it was no time for sarcasm or cynicism, or indeed for anything but indulgence and forbearance.

'Good-night, William,' he said, in a really soft voice, while his face looked benevolently compassionate. 'Good-night, lad. I wish you and your future wife much prosperity; and I hope she will satisfy your fastidious soul.'

I had much ado to refrain from laughing as I beheld the magnanimous pity of his mien; maintaining, however, a grave air, I said: 'I thought you would have liked to have seen Mdlle. Henri?'

'Oh, that is the name! Yes—if it would be convenient, I should like to see her—but——' He hesitated.

'Well?'

'I should on no account wish to intrude.'

'Come, then,' said I. We set out. Hunsden no doubt regarded me as a rash, imprudent man, thus to show my poor little grisette sweetheart, in her poor little unfurnished grenier; but he prepared to act the real gentleman, having, in fact, the kernel of that character, under the harsh husk it pleased him to wear by way of mental mackintosh. He talked affably, and even gently, as we went along the street; he had never been so civil to me in his life. We reached the house, entered, ascended the stair; on gaining the lobby, Hunsden turned to mount a narrower stair which led to a higher story; I saw his mind was bent on the attics.

'Here, Mr. Hunsden,' said I quietly, tapping at Frances' door. He turned; in his genuine politeness he was a little disconcerted at having made the mistake; his eye reverted to the green mat, but he said nothing.

We walked in, and Frances rose from her seat near the table to receive us; her mourning attire gave her a recluse, rather conventual, but withal very distinguished look; its grave simplicity added nothing to beauty, but much to dignity; the finish of the white collar and manchettes sufficed for a relief to the merino gown of solemn black; ornament was forsworn. Frances curtsied with sedate grace, looking, as she always did, when one first accosted her, more a woman to respect than to love; I introduced Mr. Hunsden, and she expressed her happiness at making his acquaintance in French. The pure and polished accent, the low yet sweet and rather full voice, produced their effect immediately; Hunsden spoke French in reply; I had not heard him speak that language before; he managed it very well. I retired to the window-seat; Mr. Hunsden, at his hostess's invitation, occupied a chair near the hearth; from my position I could see them both, and the room too, at a glance. The room was so clean and bright, it looked like a little polished cabinet; a glass filled with flowers in the centre of the table, a fresh rose in each china cup on the mantelpiece, gave it an air of *fête*. Frances was serious, and Mr. Hunsden subdued, but both mutually polite; they got on at the French swimmingly: ordinary topics were discussed with great state and decorum; I thought I had never seen two such models of propriety, for Hunsden (thanks to the constraint of the foreign tongue) was obliged to shape his phrases, and measure his sentences, with a care that forbade any eccentricity. At last England was mentioned, and Frances proceeded to ask questions. Animated by degrees she began to change, just as a grave night-sky changes at the approach of sunrise: first it seemed as if her forehead cleared, then her eyes glittered, her features relaxed, and became quite mobile; her subdued complexion grew warm and transparent; to me, she now looked pretty; before, she had only looked ladylike.

She had many things to say to the Englishman just fresh from his island-country, and she urged him with an enthusiasm of curiosity which ere long thawed Hunsden's reserve as fire thaws a congealed viper. I use this not very flattering comparison because he vividly reminded me of a snake waking from torpor, as he erected his tall form, reared his head, before a little declined, and putting back his hair from his broad Saxon forehead, showed unshaded the gleam of almost savage satire which his interlocutor's tone of eagerness and look of ardour had sufficed at once to kindle in his soul and elicit from his eyes: he was himself, as Frances was herself, and in none but his own language would he now address her.

'You understand English?' was the prefatory question.

'A little.'

'Well, then, you shall have plenty of it; and first, I see you've not much more sense than some others of my acquaintance' (indicating me with his thumb), 'or else you'd never turn rabid about that dirty little country called England; for rabid, I see you are; I read Anglophobia in your looks, and hear it in your words. Why, Mademoiselle, is it possible that anybody with a grain of rationality should feel enthusiasm about a mere name, and that name England? I thought you were a lady-abbess five minutes ago, and respected you accordingly; and now I see you are a sort of Swiss sibyl, with high Tory and high Church principles!'

'England is your country?' asked Frances.

'Yes.'

'And you don't like it?'

'I'd be sorry to like it! A little corrupt, venal, lord-and-king-cursed nation, full of mucky pride (as they say in ——shire), and helpless pauperism; rotten with abuses, worm-eaten with prejudices!'

'You might say so of almost every state; there are abuses and prejudices everywhere, and I thought fewer in England than in other countries.'

'Come to England and see. Come to Birmingham and Manchester; come to St. Giles's in London, and get a practical notion of how our system works. Examine the footprints of our august aristocracy; see how they walk in blood, crushing hearts as they go. Just put your head in at English cottage doors; get a glimpse of Famine crouched torpid on black hearthstones; of Disease lying bare on beds without coverlets, of Infamy wantoning viciously with Ignorance, though indeed Luxury is her favourite paramour, and princely halls are dearer to her than thatched hovels ——'

'I was not thinking of the wretchedness and vice in England; I was thinking of the good side—of what is elevated in your character as a nation.'

'There is no good side—none at least of which you can have any knowledge; for you cannot appreciate the efforts of industry, the achievements of enterprise, or the discoveries of science: narrowness of education and obscurity of position quite incapacitate you from understanding those points; and as to historical and poetical associations, I will not insult you, Mademoiselle, by supposing that you alluded to such humbug.'

'But I did partly.'

Hunsden laughed—his laugh of unmitigated scorn.

'I did, Mr. Hunsden. Are you of the number of those to whom such associations give no pleasure?'

'Mademoiselle, what is an association? I never saw one. What is its length, breadth, weight, value—ay, *value?* What price will it bring in the market?'

'Your portrait, to any one who loved you, would, for the sake of association, be without price.'

That inscrutable Hunsden heard this remark and felt it rather acutely, too, somewhere; for he coloured—a thing not unusual with him, when hit unawares on a tender point. A sort of trouble momentarily darkened his eye, and I believe he filled up the transient pause succeeding his antagonist's home-thrust, by a wish that some one did love him as he would like to be loved—some one whose love he could unreservedly return.

The lady pursued her temporary advantage.

'If your world is a world without associations, Mr. Hunsden, I no longer wonder that you hate England so. I don't clearly know what Paradise is, and what angels are; yet taking it to be the most glorious region I can conceive, and angels the most elevated existences—if one of them—if

Abdiel the Faithful himself' (she was thinking of Milton) 'were suddenly stripped of the faculty of association, I think he would soon rush forth from "the ever-during gates," leave heaven, and seek what he had lost in hell. Yes, in the very hell from which he turned "with retorted scorn."'

Frances' tone in saying this was as marked as her language, and it was when the word 'hell' twanged off from her lips, with a somewhat startling emphasis, that Hunsden deigned to bestow one slight glance of admiration. He liked something strong, whether in man or woman; he liked whatever dared to clear conventional limits. He had never before heard a lady say 'hell' with that uncompromising sort of accent, and the sound pleased him from a lady's lips; he would fain have had Frances to strike the string again, but it was not in her way. The display of eccentric vigour never gave her pleasure, and it only sounded in her voice or flashed in her countenance when extraordinary circumstances—and those generally painful—forced it out of the depths where it burned latent. To me, once or twice, she had, in intimate conversation, uttered venturous thoughts in nervous language; but when the hour of such manifestation was past, I could not recall it; it came of itself and of itself departed. Hunsden's excitations she put by soon with a smile, and recurring to the theme of disputation, said—'Since England is nothing, why do the continental nations respect her so?'

'I should have thought no child would have asked that question,' replied Hunsden, who never at any time gave information without reproving for stupidity those who asked it of him. 'If you had been my pupil, as I suppose you once had the misfortune to be that of a deplorable character not a hundred miles off, I would have put you in the corner for such a confession of ignorance. Why, Mademoiselle, can't you see that it is our *gold* which buys us French politeness, German good-will, and Swiss servility?' And he sneered diabolically.

'Swiss!' said Frances, catching the word 'servility.' 'Do you call my countrymen servile?' And she started up.

I could not suppress a low laugh; there was ire in her glance and defiance in her attitude. 'Do you abuse Switzerland to me, Mr. Hunsden? Do you think I have no associations? Do you calculate that I am prepared to dwell only on what vice and degradation may be found in Alpine villages, and to leave quite out of my heart the social greatness of my countrymen, and our blood-earned freedom, and the natural glories of our mountains? You're mistaken—you're mistaken.'

'Social greatness? Call it what you will, your countrymen are sensible fellows; they make a marketable article of what to you is an abstract idea; they have, ere this, sold their social greatness and also their blood-earned freedom to be the servants of foreign kings.'

'You never were in Switzerland?'

'Yes—I have been there twice.'

'You know nothing of it.'

'I do.'

'And you say the Swiss are mercenary, as a parrot says "Poor Poll," or as the Belgians here say the English are not brave, or as the French accuse them of being perfidious: there is no justice in your dictums.'

'There is truth.'

'I tell you, Mr. Hunsden, you are a more unpractical man than I am an unpractical woman, for you don't acknowledge what really exists; you want to annihilate individual patriotism and national greatness as an atheist would annihilate God and his own soul, by denying their existence.'

'Where are you flying to? You are off at a tangent—I thought we were talking about the mercenary nature of the Swiss.'

'We were—and if you proved to me that the Swiss are mercenary to-morrow (which you cannot do) I should love Switzerland still.'

'You would be mad, then—mad as a March hare—to indulge in a passion for millions of shiploads of soil, timber, snow, and ice.'

'Not so mad as you who love nothing.'

'There's a method in my madness; there's none in yours.'

'Your method is to squeeze the sap out of creation and make manure of the refuse, by way of turning it to what you call use.'

'You cannot reason at all,' said Hunsden; 'there is no logic in you.'

'Better to be without logic than without feeling,' retorted Frances, who was now passing backwards and forwards from her cupboard to the table, intent, if not on hospitable thoughts, at least on hospitable deeds, for she was laying the cloth, and putting plates, knives and forks thereon.

'Is that a hit at me, Mademoiselle? Do you suppose I am without feeling?'

'I suppose you are always interfering with your own feelings, and those of other people, and dogmatising about the irrationality of this, that, and the other sentiment, and then ordering it to be suppressed because you imagine it to be inconsistent with logic.'

'I do right.'

Frances had stepped out of sight into a sort of little pantry; she soon reappeared.

'You do right? Indeed, no! You are much mistaken if you think so. Just be so good as to let me get to the fire, Mr. Hunsden; I have something to cook.' (An interval occupied in settling a casserole on the fire; then, while she stirred its contents:) 'Right! as if it were right to crush any pleasurable sentiment that God has given to man, especially any sentiment that, like patriotism, spreads man's selfishness in wider circles' (fire stirred, dish put down before it).

'Were you born in Switzerland?'

'I should think so, or else why should I call it my country?'

'And where did you get your English features and figure?'

'I am English, too; half the blood in my veins is

English; thus I have a right to a double power of patriotism, possessing an interest in two noble, free, and fortunate countries.'

'You had an English mother?'

'Yes, yes; and you, I suppose, had a mother from the moon or from Utopia, since not a nation in Europe has a claim on your interest?'

'On the contrary, I'm a universal patriot, if you could understand me rightly: my country is the world.'

'Sympathies so widely diffused must be very shallow: will you have the goodness to come to table? Monsieur' (to me, who appeared to be now absorbed in reading by moonlight)—'Monsieur, supper is served.'

This was said in quite a different voice to that in which she had been bandying phrases with Mr. Hunsden—not so short, graver and softer.

'Frances, what do you mean by preparing supper? We had no intention of staying.'

'Ah, Monsieur, but you have stayed, and supper is prepared; you have only the alternative of eating it.'

The meal was a foreign one, of course; it consisted in two small but tasty dishes of meat prepared with skill and served with nicety; a salad and 'fromage français' completed it. The business of eating interposed a brief truce between the belligerents, but no sooner was supper disposed of than they were at it again. The fresh subject of dispute ran on the spirit of religious intolerance which Mr. Hunsden affirmed to exist strongly in Switzerland, notwithstanding the professed attachment of the Swiss to freedom. Here Frances had greatly the worst of it, not only because she was unskilled to argue, but because her own real opinions on the point in question happened to coincide pretty nearly with Mr. Hunsden's, and she only contradicted him out of opposition. At last she gave in, confessing that she thought as he thought, but bidding him take notice that she did not consider herself beaten.

'No more did the French at Waterloo,' said Hunsden.

'There is no comparison between the cases,' rejoined Frances; 'mine was a sham fight.'

'Sham or real, it's up with you.'

'No; though I have neither logic nor wealth of words, yet in a case where my opinion really differed from yours, I would adhere to it when I had not another word to say in its defence; you should be baffled by dumb determination. You speak of Waterloo; your Wellington ought to have been conquered there, according to Napoleon; but he persevered in spite of the laws of war, and was victorious in defiance of military tactics. I would do as he did.'

'I'll be bound for it you would; probably you have some of the same sort of stubborn stuff in you.'

'I should be sorry if I had not; he and Tell were brothers, and I'd scorn the Swiss, man or woman, who had none of the much enduring nature of our heroic William in his soul.'

'If Tell was like Wellington, he was an ass.'

'Does not *ass* mean *baudet?*' asked Frances, turning to me.

'No, no,' replied I, 'it means an *esprit-fort;* and now,' I continued, as I saw that fresh occasion of strife was brewing between these two, 'it is high time to go.'

Hunsden rose.

'Good-by,' said he to Frances; 'I shall be off for this glorious England to-morrow, and it may be twelve months or more before I come to Brussels again; whenever I do come I'll seek you out, and you shall see if I don't find means to make you fiercer than a dragon. You've done pretty well this evening, but next interview you shall challenge me outright. Meantime you're doomed to become Mrs. William Crimsworth, I suppose; poor young lady! but you have a spark of spirit; cherish it, and give the Professor the full benefit thereof.'

'Are you married, Mr. Hunsden?' asked Frances, suddenly.

'No. I should have thought you might have guessed I was a Benedict by my look.'

'Well, whenever you marry, don't take a wife out of Switzerland; for if you begin blaspheming Helvetia, and cursing the cantons—above all, if you mention the word *ass* in the same breath with the name Tell (for ass *is* baudet, I know; though Monsieur is pleased to translate it *esprit-fort*), your mountain-maid will some night smother her Breton-bretonnant, even as your own Shakspeare's Othello smothered Desdemona.'

'I am warned,' said Hunsden; 'and so are you, lad' (nodding to me). 'I hope yet to hear of a travesty of the Moor and his gentle lady, in which the parts shall be reversed according to the plan just sketched—you, however, being in my nightcap. Farewell, Mademoiselle!'

He bowed on her hand, absolutely like Sir Charles Grandison on that of Harriet Byron; adding—'Death from such fingers would not be without charms.'

'Mon Dieu!' murmured Frances, opening her large eyes and lifting her distinctly arched brows; 'c'est qu'il fait des compliments! je ne m'y suis pas attendu.'

She smiled, half in ire, half in mirth, curtsied with foreign grace, and so they parted.

No sooner had we got into the street than Hunsden collared me.

'And that is your lace-mender?' said he; 'and you reckon you have done a fine, magnanimous thing in offering to marry her? You, a scion of Seacombe, have proved your disdain of social distinctions by taking up with an *ouvrière!* And I pitied the fellow, thinking his feelings had misled him, and that he had hurt himself by contracting a low match!'

'Just let go my collar, Hunsden.'

On the contrary, he swayed me to and fro; so I grappled him round the waist. It was dark; the street lonely and lampless. We had then a tug for it; and after we had both rolled on the pavement, and with difficulty picked ourselves up, we agreed to walk on more soberly.

'Yes, that's my lace-mender,' said I; 'and she is to be mine for life—God willing.'

'God is not willing—you can't suppose it; what business have you to be suited so well with a partner? and she treats you with a sort of respect, too, and says, 'Monsieur,' and modulates her tone in addressing you, actually, as if you were something superior! She could not evince more deference to such a one as I, were she favoured by fortune to the supreme extent of being my choice instead of yours.'

'Hunsden, you're a puppy. But you've only seen the title-page of my happiness; you don't know the tale that follows; you cannot conceive the interest and sweet variety and thrilling excitement of the narrative.'

Hunsden—speaking low and deep, for we had now entered a busier street—desired me to hold my peace, threatening to do something dreadful if I stimulated his wrath further by boasting. I laughed till my sides ached. We soon reached his hotel; before he entered it, he said—

'Don't be vainglorious. Your lace-mender is too good for you, but not good enough for me; neither physically nor morally does she come up to my ideal of a woman. No; I dream of something far beyond that pale-faced, excitable little Helvetian (by-the-by she has infinitely more of the nervous, mobile Parisienne in her than of the robust "Jungfrau"). Your Mdlle. Henri is in person chétive, in mind sans caractère, compared with the queen of my visions. You, indeed, may put up with that minois chiffonné; but when I marry I must have straighter and more harmonious features, to say nothing of a nobler and better developed shape than that perverse, ill-thriven child can boast.'

'Bribe a seraph to fetch you a coal of fire from heaven, if you will,' said I, 'and with it kindle life in the tallest, fattest, most boneless, fullest blooded of Rubens' painted women—leave me only my Alpine Peri, and I'll not envy you.'

With a simultaneous movement, each turned his back on the other. Neither said 'God bless you;' yet on the morrow the sea was to roll between us.

CHAPTER XXV

In two months more Frances had fulfilled the time of mourning for her aunt. One January morning—the first of the new-year holidays—I went in a fiacre, accompanied only by M. Vandenhuten, to the Rue Notre Dame aux Neiges, and having alighted alone and walked up-stairs, I found Frances apparently waiting for me, dressed in a style scarcely appropriate to that cold, bright, frosty day. Never till now had I seen her attired in any other than black or sad-coloured stuff; and there she stood by the window, clad all in white, and white of a most diaphanous texture; her array was very simple, to be sure, but it looked imposing and festal because it was so clear, full, and floating; a veil shadowed her head, and hung below her knee; a little wreath of pink flowers fastened it to her thickly-tressed Grecian plait, and thence it fell softly on each side of her face. Singular to state, she was, or had been crying; when I asked her if she were ready, she said, 'Yes, Monsieur,' with something very like a checked sob; and when I took a shawl, which lay on the table, and folded it round her, not only did tear after tear course unbidden down her cheek, but she shook to my ministration like a reed. I said I was sorry to see her in such low spirits, and requested to be allowed an insight into the origin thereof. She only said, 'It was impossible to help it,' and then voluntarily, though hurriedly, putting her hand into mine, accompanied me out of the room, and ran down-stairs with a quick, uncertain step, like one who was eager to get some formidable piece of business over. I put her into the fiacre. M. Vandenhuten received her, and seated her beside himself; we drove all together to the Protestant chapel, went through a certain service in the Common Prayer Book, and she and I came out married. M. Vandenhuten had given the bride away.

We took no bridal trip; our modesty, screened by the peaceful obscurity of our station, and the pleasant isolation of our circumstances, did not exact that additional precaution. We repaired at once to a small house I had taken in the faubourg nearest to that part of the city where the scene of our avocations lay.

Three or four hours after the wedding ceremony, Frances, divested of her bridal snow, and attired in a pretty lilac gown of warmer materials, a piquant black silk apron, and a lace collar with some finishing decoration of lilac ribbon, was kneeling on the carpet of a neatly-furnished though not spacious parlour, arranging on the shelves of a chiffonnière some books which I handed to her from the table. It was snowing fast out of doors; the afternoon had turned out wild and cold; the leaden sky seemed full of drifts, and the street was already ankle-deep in the white downfall. Our fire burned bright, our new habitation looked brilliantly clean and fresh, the furniture was all arranged, and there were but some articles of glass, china, books, &c., to put in order. Frances found in this business occupation till tea-time, and then, after I had distinctly instructed her how to make a cup of tea in rational English style, and after she had got over the dismay occasioned by seeing such an extravagant amount of material put into the pot, she administered to me a proper British repast, at which there wanted neither candles nor urn, firelight nor comfort.

Our week's holiday glided by, and we readdressed ourselves to labour. Both my wife and I began in good earnest with the notion that we were working people, destined to earn our bread by exertion, and that of the most assiduous kind. Our days were thoroughly occupied; we used to part every morning at eight o'clock, and not meet again till five P.M.; but into what sweet rest did the turmoil of each busy day decline! Looking down the vista of memory, I see the evenings passed in that little parlour like a long string of rubies circling the dusk brow of the past. Unvaried were they as each cut gem, and like each gem brilliant and burning.

A year and a half passed. One morning (it was a *fête*, and we had the day to ourselves) Frances said to me, with a suddenness peculiar to her when she had been thinking long on a subject, and at last, having come to a conclusion, wished to test its soundness by the touchstone of my judgment: 'I don't work enough.'

'What now?' demanded I, looking up from my coffee, which I had been deliberately stirring while enjoying, in anticipation, a walk I proposed to take with Frances, that fine summer day (it was June), to a certain farmhouse in the country, where we were to dine. 'What now?' and I saw at once, in the serious ardour of her face, a project of vital importance.

'I am not satisfied,' returned she: 'you are now earning eight thousand francs a year' (it was true; my efforts, punctuality, the fame of my pupils' progress, the publicity of my station, had so far helped me on), 'while I am still at my miserable twelve hundred francs. I *can* do better, and I *will*.'

'You work as long and as diligently as I do, Frances.'

'Yes, Monsieur, but I am not working in the right way, and I am convinced of it.'

'You wish to change—you have a plan for progress in your mind; go and put on your bonnet; and, while we take our walk, you shall tell me of it.'

'Yes, Monsieur.'

She went—as docile as a well-trained child; she was a curious mixture of tractability and firmness: I sat thinking about her, and wondering what her plan could be, when she re-entered.

'Monsieur, I have given Minnie' (our bonne) 'leave to go out too, as it is so very fine; so will you be kind enough to lock the door, and take the key with you?'

'Kiss me, Mrs. Crimsworth,' was my not very apposite reply; but she looked so engaging in her light summer dress and little cottage bonnet, and her manner in speaking to me was then, as always, so unaffectedly and suavely respectful, that my heart expanded at the sight of her, and a kiss seemed necessary to content its importunity.

'There, Monsieur.'

'Why do you always call me "Monsieur"? Say William.'

'I cannot pronounce your W; besides, "Monsieur" belongs to you; I like it best.'

Minnie having departed in clean cap and smart shawl, we, too, set out, leaving the house solitary and silent—silent, at least, but for the ticking of the clock. We were soon clear of Brussels; the fields received us, and then the lanes, remote from carriage-resounding *chaussées*. Ere long we came upon a nook, so rural, green, and secluded, it might have been a spot in some pastoral English province; a bank of short and mossy grass, under a hawthorn, offered a seat too tempting to be declined; we took it, and when we had admired and examined some English-looking wild-flowers growing at our feet, I recalled Frances' attention and my own to the topic touched on at breakfast.

'What was her plan?' A natural one—the next step to be mounted by us, or, at least, by her, if she wanted to rise in her profession. She proposed to begin a school. We already had the means for commencing on a careful scale, having lived greatly within our income. We possessed, too, by this time, an extensive and eligible connection, in the sense advantageous to our business; for, though our circle of visiting acquaintance continued as limited as ever, we were now widely known in schools and families as teachers. When Frances had developed her plan, she intimated, in some closing sentences, her hopes for the future. If we only had good health and tolerable success, we might, she was sure, in time realise an independency; and that, perhaps, before we were too old to enjoy it; then both she and I would rest; and what was to hinder us from going to live in England? England was still her Promised Land.

I put no obstacle in her way; raised no objection; I knew she was not one who could live quiescent and inactive, or even comparatively inactive. Duties she must have to fulfil, and important duties; work to do—and exciting, absorbing, profitable work; strong faculties stirred in her frame, and they demanded full nourishment, free exercise: mine was not the hand ever to starve or cramp them; no, I delighted in offering them sustenance, and in clearing them wider space for action.

'You have conceived a plan, Frances,' said I, 'and a good plan; execute it; you have my free consent, and wherever and whenever my assistance is wanted, ask, and you shall have.'

Frances' eyes thanked me almost with tears; just a sparkle or two, soon brushed away; she possessed herself of my hand too, and held it for some time very close clasped in both her own, but she said no more than 'Thank you, Monsieur.'

We passed a divine day, and came home late, lighted by a full summer moon.

Ten years rushed now upon me with dusty, vibrating, unresting wings; years of bustle, action, unslacked endeavour; years in which I and my wife, having launched ourselves in the full career of progress, as progress whirls on in European capitals, scarcely knew repose, were strangers to amusement, never thought of indulgence, and yet, as our course ran side by side, as we marched hand in hand, we neither murmured, repented, nor faltered. Hope indeed cheered us; health kept us up; harmony of thought and deed smoothed many difficulties, and finally, success bestowed every now and then encouraging reward on diligence. Our school became one of the most popular in Brussels, and as by degrees we raised our terms and elevated our system of education, our choice of pupils grew more select, and at length included the children of the best families in Belgium. We had too an excellent connection in England, first opened by the unsolicited recommendation of Mr. Hunsden, who having been over, and having abused me for my prosperity in set terms, went back, and soon after sent a leash of young ——shire heiresses—his cousins; as he said, 'to be polished off by Mrs. Crimsworth.'

As to this same Mrs. Crimsworth, in one sense she was become another woman, though in another she remained unchanged. So different was she under different circumstances, I seemed to possess two wives. The faculties of her nature, already disclosed when I married her, remained fresh and fair; but other faculties shot up strong, branched out broad, and quite altered the external character of the plant. Firmness, activity, and enterprise covered, with grave foliage, poetic feeling and fervour; but these flowers were still there, preserved pure and dewy under the umbrage of later growth and hardier nature: perhaps I only in the world knew the secret of their existence, but to me they were ever ready to yield an exquisite fragrance and present a beauty as chaste as radiant.

In the daytime my house and establishment were conducted by Madame the directress, a stately and elegant woman, bearing much anxious thought on her large brow; much calculated dignity in her serious mien: immediately after breakfast I used to part with this lady; I went to my college, she to her schoolroom; returning for an hour in the course of the day, I found her always in class, intently occupied; silence, industry, observance, attending on her presence. When not actually teaching, she was overlooking and guiding by eye and gesture; she then appeared vigilant and solicitous. When communicating instruction, her aspect was more animated; she seemed to feel a certain enjoyment in the occupation. The language in which she addressed her pupils, though simple and unpretending, was never trite or dry; she did not speak from routine formulas—she made her own phrases as she went on, and very nervous and impressive phrases they frequently were; often, when elucidating favourite points of history, or geography, she would wax genuinely eloquent in her earnestness. Her pupils, or at least the elder and more intelligent amongst them, recognised well the language of a superior mind; they felt too, and some of them received the impression of elevated sentiments; there was little fondling between mistress and girls, but some of Frances' pupils in time learnt to love her sincerely, all of them beheld her with respect; her general demeanour towards them was serious; sometimes benignant when they pleased her with their progress and attention, always scrupulously refined and considerate. In cases where reproof or punishment was called for she was usually forbearing enough; but if any took advantage of that forbearance, which sometimes happened, a sharp, sudden and lightning-like severity taught the culprit the extent of the mistake committed. Sometimes a gleam of tenderness softened her eyes and manner, but this was rare; only when a pupil was sick, or when it pined after home, or in the case of some little motherless child, or of one much poorer than its companions, whose scanty wardrobe and mean appointments brought on it the contempt of the jewelled young countesses and silk-clad misses. Over such feeble fledglings the directress spread a wing of kindliest protection: it was to their bed-side she came at night to tuck them warmly in; it was after them she looked in winter to see that they always had a comfortable seat by the stove; it was they who by turns were summoned to the salon to receive some little dole of cake or fruit—to sit on a footstool at the fireside—to enjoy home comforts, and almost home liberty, for an evening together—to be spoken to gently and softly, comforted, encouraged, cherished—and when bedtime came, dismissed with a kiss of true tenderness. As to Julia and Georgiana G——, daughters of an English baronet, as to Mdlle. Mathilde de ——, heiress of a Belgian count, and sundry other children of patrician race, the directress was careful of them as of the others, anxious for their progress, as for that of the rest—but it never seemed to enter her head to distinguish them by a mark of preference; one girl of noble blood she loved dearly—a young Irish baroness—Lady Catherine ——; but it was for her enthusiastic heart and clever head, for her generosity and her genius, the title and rank went for nothing.

My afternoons were spent also in college, with the exception of an hour that my wife daily exacted of me for her establishment, and with which she would not dispense. She said that I must spend that time amongst her pupils to learn their characters, to be *au courant* with everything that was passing in the house, to become interested in what interested her, to be able to give her my opinion on knotty points when she required it, and this she did constantly, never allowing my interest in the pupils to fall asleep, and never making any change of importance without my cognizance and consent. She delighted to sit by me when I gave my lessons (lessons in literature), her hands folded on her knee, the most fixedly attentive of any present. She rarely addressed me in class; when she did, it was with an air of marked deference; it was her pleasure, her joy to make me still the master in all things.

At six o'clock P.M. my daily labours ceased. I then came home, for my home was my heaven; ever at that hour, as I entered our private sitting-room, the lady-directress vanished from before my eyes, and Frances Henri, my own little lace-mender, was magically restored to my arms; much disappointed she would have been if her master had not been as constant to the tryst as herself, and if his truthful kiss had not been prompt to answer her soft, 'Bon soir, Monsieur.'

Talk French to me she would, and many a punishment she has had for her wilfulness. I fear the choice of chastisement must have been injudicious, for instead of correcting the fault, it seemed to encourage its renewal. Our evenings were our own; that recreation was necessary to refresh our strength for the due discharge of our duties; sometimes we spent them all in conversation, and my young Genevese, now that she was thoroughly accustomed to her English professor, now that she loved him too absolutely to fear him much, reposed in him a confidence so unlimited that topics of conversation could no more be wanting with him than subjects for communion with her own heart. In those moments, happy as a bird with its mate, she would show me what she had of vivacity, of mirth, of originality in her well-dowered nature. She would show, too, some stores of raillery, of 'malice,' and would vex, tease, pique me sometimes about what she called my 'bizarreries anglaises,' my 'caprices insulaires,' with a wild and witty wickedness that made a perfect white demon of her while it lasted. This was rare, however, and the elfish freak was always short: sometimes when driven a little hard in the war of words—for her tongue did ample justice to the pith, the point, the delicacy of her native French, in which language she always attacked me—I used to turn upon her with my old decision, and arrest bodily the sprite that teased me. Vain idea! no sooner had I grasped hand or arm than the elf was gone; the provocative smile quenched in the expressive brown eyes, and a ray of gentle homage shone under the lids in its place. I had seized a mere vexing fairy, and found a submissive and supplicating little mortal woman in my arms. Then I made her get a book, and read English to me for an hour by way of penance. I frequently dosed her with Wordsworth in this way, and Wordsworth steadied her soon; she had a difficulty in comprehending his deep, serene, and sober mind; his language, too, was not facile to her; she had to ask questions, to sue for explanations, to be like a child and a novice, and to acknowledge me as her senior and director. Her instinct instantly penetrated and possessed the meaning of more ardent and imaginative writers. Byron excited her, Scott she loved; Wordsworth only she puzzled at, wondered over, and hesitated to pronounce an opinion upon.

But whether she read to me, or talked with me; whether she teased me in French, or entreated me in English; whether she jested with wit, or inquired with deference; narrated with interest, or listened with attention; whether she smiled *at* me or *on* me, always at nine o'clock I was left—abandoned. She would extricate herself from my arms, quit my side, take her lamp, and be gone. Her mission was upstairs; I have followed her sometimes and watched her. First she opened the door of the dortoir (the pupils' chamber), noiselessly she glided up the long room between the two rows of white beds, surveyed all the sleepers; if any were wakeful especially if any were sad, spoke to them and soothed them; stood some minutes to ascertain that all was safe and tranquil; trimmed the watch-light which burned in the apartment all night, then withdrew, closing the door behind her without sound. Thence she glided to our own chamber; it had a little cabinet within; this she sought; there, too, appeared a bed, but one, and that a very small one; her face (the night I followed and observed her) changed as she approached this tiny couch; from grave it warmed to earnest; she shaded with one hand the lamp she held in the other; she bent above the pillow and hung over a child asleep; its slumber (that evening at least, and usually, I believe) was sound and calm; no tear wet its dark eyelashes; no fever heated its round cheek; no ill dream discomposed its budding features. Frances gazed, she did not smile, and yet the deepest delight filled, flushed her face; feeling, pleasurable, powerful, worked in her whole frame, which still was motionless. I saw, indeed, her heart heave, her lips were a little apart, her breathing grew somewhat hurried; the child smiled; then at last the mother smiled too, and said in a low soliloquy, 'God bless my little son!' She stooped closer over him, breathed the softest of kisses on his brow, covered his minute hand with hers, and at last started up and came away. I regained the parlour before her. Entering it two minutes later she said quietly as she put down her extinguished lamp—'Victor rests well: he smiled in his sleep; he has your smile, Monsieur.'

The said Victor was of course her own boy, born in the third year of our marriage: his Christian name had been given him in honour of M. Vandenhuten, who continued always our trusty and well-beloved friend.

Frances was then a good and dear wife to me, because I was to her a good, just, and faithful husband. What she would have been had she married a harsh, envious, careless man—a profligate, a prodigal, a drunkard, or a tyrant—is another question, and one which I once propounded to her. Her answer, given after some reflection, was—'I should have tried to endure the evil or cure it for awhile; and when I found it intolerable and incurable, I should have left my torturer suddenly and silently.'

'And if law or might had forced you back again?'

'What, to a drunkard, a profligate, a selfish spendthrift, an unjust fool?'

'Yes.'

'I would have gone back; again assured myself whether or not his vice and my misery were capable of remedy; and if not, have left him again.'

'And if again forced to return, and compelled to abide?'

'I don't know,' she said, hastily. 'Why do you ask me, Monsieur?'

I would have an answer, because I saw a strange kind of spirit in her eye, whose voice I determined to waken.

'Monsieur, if a wife's nature loathes that of the man she is wedded to, marriage must be slavery. Against slavery all right thinkers revolt, and though torture be the price of resistance, torture must be dared: though the only road to freedom lie through the gates of death, those gates must be passed; for freedom is indispensable. Then, Monsieur, I would resist as far as my strength permitted; when that strength failed I should be sure of a refuge. Death would certainly screen me both from bad laws and their consequences.'

'Voluntary death, Frances?'

'No, Monsieur. I'd have courage to live out every throe of anguish fate assigned me, and principle to contend for justice and liberty to the last.'

I see you would have made no patient Grizzel. And now, supposing Fate had merely assigned you the lot of an old maid, what then? How would you have liked celibacy?'

'Not much, certainly. An old maid's life must doubtless be void and vapid—her heart strained and empty. Had I been an old maid I should have spent existence in efforts to fill the void and ease the aching. I should have probably failed, and died weary and disappointed, despised and of no account, like other single women. But I'm not an old maid,' she added quickly. 'I should have been, though, but for my master. I should never have suited any man but Professor Crimsworth—no other gentleman, French, English, or Belgian, would have thought me amiable or handsome; and I doubt whether I should have cared for the approbation of many others, if I could have obtained it. Now, I have been Professor Crimsworth's wife eight years, and what is he in my eyes? Is he honourable, beloved——?' She stopped, her voice was cut off, her eyes suddenly suffused. She and I were standing side by side; she threw her arms round me, and strained me to her heart with passionate earnestness: the energy of her whole being glowed in her dark and then dilated eye, and crimsoned her animated cheek: her look and movement were like inspiration; in one there was such a flash, in the other such a power. Half-an-hour afterwards, when she had become calm, I asked where all that wild vigour was gone which had transformed her erewhile and made her glance so thrilling and ardent—her action so rapid and strong. She looked down, smiling softly and passively:—'I cannot tell where it is gone, Monsieur,' said she; 'but I know that, whenever it is wanted, it will come back again.'

Behold us now at the close of the ten years, and we have realised an independency. The rapidity with which we attained this end had its origin in three reasons:—Firstly, we worked so hard for it; secondly, we had no incumbrances to delay success; thirdly, as soon as we had capital to invest, two well-skilled counsellors, one in Belgium, one in England, viz., Vandenhuten and Hunsden, gave us each a word of advice as to the sort of investment to be chosen. The suggestion made was judicious; and, being promptly acted on, the result proved gainful—I need not say how gainful; I communicated details to Messrs. Vandenhuten and Hunsden; nobody else can be interested in hearing them.

Accounts being wound up, and our professional connection disposed of, we both agreed that, as mammon was not our master, nor his service that in which we desired to spend our lives; as our desires were temperate, and our habits unostentatious, we had now abundance to live on—abundance to leave our boy; and should besides always have a balance on hand, which, properly managed by right sympathy and unselfish activity, might help philanthropy in her enterprises, and put solace into the hand of charity.

To England we now resolved to take wing; we arrived there safely; Frances realised the dream of her lifetime. We spent a whole summer and autumn in travelling from end to end of the British islands, and afterwards passed a winter in London. Then we thought it high time to fix our residence. My heart yearned towards my native county of ——shire; and it is in ——shire I now live; it is in the library of my own home I am now writing. That home lies amid a sequestered and rather hilly region, thirty miles removed from X——; a region whose verdure the smoke of mills has not yet sullied, whose waters still run pure, whose swells of moorland preserve in some ferny glens that lie between them the very primal wildness of nature, her moss, her bracken, her bluebells, her scents of reed and heather, her free and fresh breezes. My house is a picturesque and not too spacious dwelling, with low and long windows, a trellised and leaf-veiled porch over the front door, just now, on this summer evening, looking like an arch of roses and

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ivy. The garden is chiefly laid out in lawn, formed of the sod of the hills, with herbage short and soft as moss, full of its own peculiar flowers, tiny and starlike, imbedded in the minute embroidery of their fine foliage. At the bottom of the sloping garden there is a wicket, which opens upon a lane as green as the lawn, very long, shady, and little frequented; on the turf of this lane generally appear the first daisies of spring—whence its name—Daisy Lane; serving also as a distinction to the house.

It terminates (the lane I mean) in a valley full of wood; which wood—chiefly oak and beech—spreads shadowy about the vicinage of a very old mansion, one of the Elizabethan structures, much larger, as well as more antique than Daisy Lane, the property and residence of an individual familiar both to me and to the reader. Yes, in Hunsden Wood—for so are those glades and that grey building, with many gables and more chimneys, named—abides Yorke Hunsden, still unmarried; never, I suppose, having yet found his ideal, though I know at least a score of young ladies within a circuit of forty miles who would be willing to assist him in the search.

The estate fell to him by the death of his father, five years since; he has given up trade, after having made by it sufficient to pay off some incumbrances by which the family heritage was burdened. I say he abides here, but I do not think he is resident above five months out of the twelve; he wanders from land to land, and spends some part of each winter in town: he frequently brings visitors with him when he comes to ——shire, and these visitors are often foreigners; sometimes he has a German metaphysician, sometimes a French savant; he had once a dissatisfied and savage-looking Italian, who neither sang nor played, and of whom Frances affirmed that he had 'tout l'air d'un conspirateur.'

What English guests Hunsden invites are all either men of Birmingham or Manchester—hard men, seemingly knit up in one thought, whose talk is of free trade. The foreign visitors, too, are politicians; they take a wider theme—European progress—the spread of liberal sentiments over the Continent; on their mental tablets the names of Russia, Austria, and the Pope, are inscribed in red ink. I have heard some of them talk vigorous sense—yea, I have been present at polyglot discussions in the old, oak-lined dining-room at Hunsden Wood, where a singular insight was given of the sentiments entertained by resolute minds respecting old northern despotisms, and old southern superstitions: also, I have heard much twaddle, enounced chiefly in French and Deutsch, but let that pass. Hunsden himself tolerated the drivelling theorists; with the practical men he seemed leagued hand and heart.

When Hunsden is staying alone at the Wood (which seldom happens) he generally finds his way two or three times a week to Daisy Lane. He has a philanthropic motive for coming to smoke his cigar in our porch on summer evenings; he says he does it to kill the earwigs amongst the roses, with which insects, but for his benevolent fumigations, he intimates we should certainly be overrun. On wet days, too, we are almost sure to see him; according to him, it gets on time to work me into lunacy by treading on my mental corns, or to force from Mrs. Crimsworth revelations of the dragon within her, by insulting the memory of Hofer and Tell.

We also go frequently to Hunsden Wood, and both I and Frances relish a visit there highly. If there are other guests, their characters are an interesting study; their conversation is exciting and strange; the absence of all local narrowness both in the host and his chosen society gives a metropolitan, almost a cosmopolitan freedom and largeness to the talk. Hunsden himself is a polite man in his own house: he has, when he chooses to employ it, an inexhaustible power of entertaining guests; his very mansion too is interesting, the rooms looked storied, the passages legendary, the low-ceiled chambers, with their long rows of diamond-paned lattices, have an old-world, haunted air: in his travels he has collected stores of articles of *vertu*, which are well and tastefully disposed in his panelled or tapestried rooms: I have seen there one or two pictures and one or two pieces of statuary which many an aristocrat connoisseur might have envied.

When I and Frances have dined and spent an evening with Hunsden, he often walks home with us. His wood is large, and some of the timber is old and of huge growth. There are winding ways in it which, pursued through glade and brake, make the walk back to Daisy Lane a somewhat long one. Many a time, when we have had the benefit of a full moon, and when the night has been mild and balmy, when, moreover, a certain nightingale has been singing, and a certain stream, hid in alders, has lent the song a soft accompaniment, the remote church-bell of the one hamlet in a district of ten miles has tolled midnight ere the lord of the wood left us at our porch. Free-flowing was his talk at such hours, and far more quiet and gentle than in the day-time and before numbers. He would then forget politics and discussion, and would dwell on the past times of his house, on his family history, on himself and his own feelings—subjects each and all invested with a peculiar zest, for they were each and all unique. One glorious night in June, after I had been taunting him about his ideal bride and asking him when she would come and graft her foreign beauty on the old Hunsden oak, he answered suddenly—'You call her ideal; but see, here is her shadow; and there cannot be a shadow without a substance.'

He had led us from the depth of the 'winding way' into a glade from whence the beeches withdrew, leaving it open to the sky; an unclouded moon poured her light into this glade, and Hunsden held out under her beam an ivory miniature.

Frances, with eagerness, examined it first; then she gave it to me—still, however, pushing her little face close to mine, and seeking in my eyes what I thought of the portrait. I thought it represented a very handsome and very individual-looking female face, with, as he had once said, 'straight and harmonious features.' It was dark; the hair, raven-black, swept not only from the brow, but from the temples—seemed thrust away carelessly, as if such beauty dispensed with, nay, despised arrangement. The Italian eye looked straight into you, and an independent, determined eye it was: the mouth was as firm as fine; the chin ditto. On the back of the miniature was gilded 'Lucia.'

'That is a real head,' was my conclusion.

Hunsden smiled.

'I think so,' he replied. 'All was real in Lucia.'

'And she was somebody you would have liked to marry—but could not?'

'I should certainly have liked to marry her, and that I *have* not done so is a proof that I *could* not.'

He repossessed himself of the miniature, now again in Frances' hand, and put it away.

'What do *you* think of it?' he asked of my wife, as he buttoned his coat over it.

'I am sure Lucia once wore chains and broke them,' was the strange answer. 'I do not mean matrimonial chains,' she added, correcting herself, as if she feared mis-interpretation, 'but social chains of some sort. The face is that of one who has made an effort, and a successful and triumphant effort, to wrest some vigorous and valued faculty from insupportable constraint; and when Lucia's faculty got free, I am certain it spread wide pinions and carried her higher than—' she hesitated.

'Than what?' demanded Hunsden.

'Than "les convenances" permitted you to follow.'

'I think you grow spiteful—impertinent.'

'Lucia has trodden the stage,' continued Frances. 'You never seriously thought of marrying her; you admired her originality, her fearlessness, her energy of body and mind; you delighted in her talent, whatever that was, whether song, dance, or dramatic representation; you worshipped her beauty, which was of the sort after your own heart: but I am sure she filled a sphere from whence you would never have thought of taking a wife.'

'Ingenious,' remarked Hunsden; 'whether true or not is another question. Meantime, don't you feel your little lamp of a spirit wax very pale beside such a girandole as Lucia's?'

'Yes'

'Candid, at least; and the Professor will soon be dissatisfied with the dim light you give?'

'Will you, Monsieur?'

'My sight was always too weak to endure a blaze, Frances,' and we had now reached the wicket.

I said, a few pages back, that this is a sweet summer evening; it is—there has been a series of lovely days, and this is the loveliest; the hay is just carried from my fields, its perfume still lingers in the air. Frances proposed to me, an hour or two since, to take tea out on the lawn; I see the round table, loaded with china, placed under a certain beech; Hunsden is expected—nay, I hear he is come—there is his voice, laying down the law on some point with authority; that of Frances replies; she opposes him of course. They are disputing about Victor, of whom Hunsden affirms that his mother is making a milksop. Mrs. Crimsworth retaliates:—'Better a thousand times he should be a milksop than what he, Hunsden, calls "a fine lad;"' and moreover she says that if Hunsden were to become a fixture in the neighbourhood, and were not a mere comet, coming and going, no one knows how, when, where, or why, 'she should be quite uneasy till she had got Victor away to a school at least a hundred miles off; for that with his mutinous maxims and unpractical dogmas, he would ruin a score of children.'

I have a word to say of Victor ere I shut this manuscript in my desk—but it must be a brief one, for I hear the tinkle of silver on porcelain.

Victor is as little of a pretty child as I am of a handsome man, or his mother of a fine woman; he is pale and spare, with large eyes, as dark as those of Frances, and as deeply set as mine. His shape is symmetrical enough, but slight; his health is good. I never saw a child smile less than he does, nor one who knits such a formidable brow when sitting over a book that interests him, or while listening to tales of adventure, peril, or wonder, narrated by his mother, Hunsden, or myself. But though still, he is not unhappy—though serious, not morose; he has a susceptibility to pleasurable sensations almost too keen, for it amounts to enthusiasm. He learned to read in the old-fashioned way out of a spelling-book at his mother's knee, and as he got on without driving by that method, she thought it unnecessary to buy him ivory letters, or to try any of the other inducements to learning now deemed indispensable. When he could read, he became a glutton of books, and is so still. His toys have been few, and he has never wanted more. For those he possesses he seems to have contracted a partiality amounting to affection; this feeling, directed towards one or two living animals of the house, strengthens almost to a passion.

Mr. Hunsden gave him a mastiff cub, which he called Yorke, after the donor; it grew to a superb dog, whose fierceness, however, was much modified by the companionship and caresses of its young master. He would go nowhere, do nothing without Yorke; Yorke lay at his feet while he learned his lessons, played with him in the garden, walked with him in the lane and wood, sat near his chair at meals, was fed always by his own hand, was the first thing he sought in the morning, the last he left at night. Yorke accompanied Mr. Hunsden one day to X——, and was bitten in the street by a dog in a rabid state. As soon as Hunsden had brought him home, and had informed me of the circumstance, I went into the yard and shot him where he lay licking his wound: he was dead in an instant; he had not seen me level the gun; I stood behind him. I had scarcely been ten minutes in the house, when my ear was struck with sounds of anguish; I repaired to the yard once more, for they proceeded thence. Victor was kneeling beside his dead mastiff, bent over it, embracing its bull-like neck, and lost in a passion of the wildest woe: he saw me.

'Oh, papa, I'll never forgive you! I'll never forgive you!' was his exclamation. 'You shot Yorke—I saw it from the window. I never believed you could be so cruel—I can love you no more!'

I had much ado to explain to him, with a steady voice, the stern necessity of the deed; he still, with that inconsolable and bitter accent which I cannot render, but which pierced my heart, repeated—'He might have been cured—you should have tried—you should have burnt the wound with a hot iron, or covered it with caustic. You gave no time; and now it is too late—he is dead!'

He sank fairly down on the senseless carcase; I waited patiently a long while, till his grief had somewhat exhausted him; and then I lifted him in my arms and carried him to his mother, sure that she would comfort him best. She had witnessed the whole scene from a window; she would not come out for fear of increasing my difficulties by her emotion, but she was ready now to receive him. She took him to her kind heart, and on to her gentle lap; consoled him but with her lips, her eyes, her soft embrace, for some time; and then, when his sobs diminished, told him that Yorke had felt no pain in dying, and that if he had been left to expire naturally, his end would have been most horrible; above all, she told him that I was not cruel (for that idea seemed to give exquisite pain to poor Victor), that it was my affection for Yorke and him which had made me act so, and that I was now almost heart-broken to see him weep thus bitterly.

Victor would have been no true son of his father had these considerations, these reasons, breathed in so low, so sweet a tone—married to caresses so benign, so tender—to looks so inspired with pitying sympathy—produced no effect on him. They did produce an effect; he grew calmer, rested his face on her shoulder, and lay still in her arms. Looking up, shortly, he asked his mother to tell him over again what she had said about Yorke having suffered no pain, and my not being cruel; the balmy words being repeated, he again pillowed his cheek on her breast, and was again tranquil.

Some hours after, he came to me in my library, asked if I forgave him, and desired to be reconciled. I drew the lad to my side, and there I kept him a good while, and had much talk with him, in the course of which he disclosed many points of feeling and thought I approved of in my son. I found, it is true, few elements of the 'good fellow' or the 'fine fellow' in him; scant sparkles of the spirit which loves to flash over the wine-cup, or which kindles the passions to a destroying fire; but I saw in the soil of his heart healthy and swelling germs of compassion, affection, fidelity. I discovered in the garden of his intellect a rich growth of wholesome principles—reason, justice, moral courage, promised, if not blighted, a fertile bearing. So I bestowed on his large forehead, and on his cheek—still pale with tears—a proud and contented kiss, and sent him away comforted. Yet I saw him the next day laid on the mound under which Yorke had been buried, his face covered with his hands; he was melancholy for some weeks, and more than a year elapsed before he would listen to any proposal of having another dog.

Victor learns fast. He must soon go to Eton, where, I suspect, his first year or two will be utter wretchedness: to leave me, his mother, and his home, will give his heart an agonised wrench; then, the fagging will not suit him—but emulation, thirst after knowledge, the glory of success, will stir and reward him in time. Meantime, I feel in myself a strong repugnance to fix the hour which will uproot my sole olive branch, and transplant it far from me; and, when I speak to Frances on the subject, I am heard with a kind of patient pain, as though I alluded to some fearful operation, at which her nature shudders, but from which her fortitude will not permit her to recoil. The step must, however, be taken, and it *shall* be; for, though Frances will not make a milksop of her son, she will accustom him to a style of treatment, a forbearance, a congenial tenderness, he will meet with from none else. She sees, as I also see, a something in Victor's temper—a kind of electrical ardour and power—which emits, now and then, ominous sparks ; Hunsden calls it his spirit, and says it should not be curbed. I call it the leaven of the offending Adam, and consider that it should be, if not *whipped* out of him, at least soundly disciplined ; and that he will be cheap of any amount of either bodily or mental suffering which will ground him radically in the art of self-control. Frances gives this *something* in her son's marked character no name ; but when it appears in the grinding of his teeth, in the glittering of his eye, in the fierce revolt of feeling against disappointment, mischance, sudden sorrow, or supposed injustice, she folds him to her breast, or takes him to walk with her alone in the wood ; then she reasons with him like any philosopher, and to reason Victor is ever accessible ; then she looks at him with eyes of love, and by love Victor can be infallibly subjugated ; but will reason or love be the weapons with which in future the world will meet his violence ? Oh, no ! for that flash in his black eye—for that cloud on his bony brow—for that compression of his statuesque lips, the lad will some day get blows instead of blandishments—kicks instead of kisses ; then for the fit of mute fury which will sicken his body and madden his soul ; then for the ordeal of merited and salutary suffering, out of which he will come (I trust) a wiser and a better man.

I see him now ; he stands by Hunsden, who is seated on the lawn under the beech ; Hunsden's hand rests on the boy's collar, and he is instilling God knows what principles into his ear. Victor looks well just now, for he listens with a sort of smiling interest ; he never looks so like his mother as when he smiles—pity the sunshine breaks out so rarely ! Victor has a preference for Hunsden, full as strong as I deem desirable, being considerably more potent, decided, and indiscriminating, than any I ever entertained for that personage myself. Frances, too, regards it with a sort of unexpressed anxiety; while her son leans on Hunsden's knee, or rests against his shoulder, she roves with restless movement round, like a dove guarding its young from a hovering hawk; she says she wishes Hunsden had children of his own, for then he would better know the danger of inciting their pride and indulging their foibles.

Frances approaches my library window; puts aside the honeysuckle which half covers it, and tells me tea is ready; seeing that I continue busy she enters the room, comes near me quietly, and puts her hand on my shoulder.

'Monsieur est trop appliqué.'

'I shall soon have done.'

She draws a chair near, and sits down to wait till I have finished; her presence is as pleasant to my mind as the perfume of the fresh hay and spicy flowers, as the glow of the westering sun, as the repose of the midsummer eve are to my senses.

But Hunsden comes; I hear his step, and there he is, bending through the lattice, from which he has thrust away the woodbine with unsparing hand, disturbing two bees and a butterfly.

'Crimsworth! I say, Crimsworth! take that pen out of his hand, mistress, and make him lift up his head.'

'Well, Hunsden? I hear you——'

'I was at X—— yesterday! your brother Ned is getting richer than Crœsus by railway speculations; they call him in the Piece Hall a stag of ten; and I have heard from Brown. M. and Madame Vandenhuten and Jean Baptiste talk of coming to see you next month. He mentions the Pelets too; he says their domestic harmony is not the finest in the world, but in business they are doing "on ne peut mieux," which circumstance he concludes will be a sufficient consolation to both for any little crosses in the affections. Why don't you invite the Pelets to ——shire, Crimsworth? I should so like to see your first flame, Zoraïde. Mistress, don't be jealous, but he loved that lady to distraction; I know it for a fact. Brown says she weighs twelve stone now; you see what you've lost, Mr. Professor. Now, Monsieur and Madame, if you don't come to tea, Victor and I will begin without you.'

'Papa, come!'

THE END OF 'THE PROFESSOR'

EMMA

A FRAGMENT OF A STORY BY CHARLOTTE BRONTË

EMMA

A FRAGMENT OF A STORY BY CHARLOTTE BRONTË

This fragment, the last literary effort of the author of 'Jane Eyre,' appeared in the 'Cornhill Magazine' for April, 1860, preceded by the following introduction from the pen of its editor, Mr. W. M. Thackeray, entitled :—

THE LAST SKETCH

[Not many days since I went to visit a house where in former years I had received many a friendly welcome. We went into the owner's—an artist's—studio. Prints, pictures, and sketches hung on the walls as I had last seen and remembered them. The implements of the painter's art were there. The light which had shone upon so many, many hours of patient and cheerful toil, poured through the northern window upon print and bust, lay figure and sketch, and upon the easel before which the good, the gentle, the beloved Leslie laboured. In this room the busy brain had devised, and the skilful hand executed, I know not how many of the noble works which have delighted the world with their beauty and charming humour. Here the poet called up into pictorial presence, and informed with life, grace, beauty, infinite friendly mirth and wondrous naturalness of expression, the people of whom his dear books told him the stories,—his Shakspeare, his Cervantes, his Molière, his Le Sage. There was his last work on the easel—a beautiful fresh smiling shape of Titania, such as his sweet guileless fancy imagined the *Midsummer Night's* queen to be. Gracious, and pure, and bright, the sweet smiling image glimmers on the canvas. Fairy elves, no doubt, were to have been grouped around their mistress in laughing clusters. Honest Bottom's grotesque head and form are indicated as reposing by the side of the consummate beauty. The darkling forest would have grown around them, with the stars glittering from the midsummer sky: the flowers at the queen's feet, and the boughs and foliage about her, would have been peopled with gambolling sprites and fays. They were dwelling in the artist's mind no doubt, and would have been developed by that patient, faithful, admirable genius: but the busy brain stopped working, the skilful hand fell lifeless, the loving, honest heart ceased to beat. What was she to have been—that fair Titania—when perfected by the patient skill of the poet, who in imagination saw the sweet innocent figure, and with tender courtesy and caresses, as it were, posed and shaped and traced the fair form? Is there record kept anywhere of fancies conceived, beautiful, unborn? Some day will they assume form in some yet undeveloped light? If our bad unspoken thoughts are registered against us, and are written in the awful account, will not the good thoughts unspoken, the love and tenderness, the pity, beauty, charity, which pass through the breast, and cause the heart to throb with silent good, find a remembrance, too? A few weeks more, and this lovely offspring of the poet's conception would have been complete—to charm the world with its beautiful mirth. May there not be some sphere unknown to us where it may have an existence? They say our words, once out of our lips, go travelling *in omne ævum*, reverberating for ever and ever. If our words, why not our thoughts? If the Has Been, why not the Might Have Been?

Some day our spirits may be permitted to walk in galleries of fancies more wondrous and beautiful than any achieved works which at present we see, and our minds to behold and delight in masterpieces which poets' and artists' minds have fathered and conceived only.

With a feeling much akin to that with which I looked upon the friend's—the admirable artist's—unfinished work, I can fancy many readers turning to these—the last pages which were traced by Charlotte Brontë's hand. Of the multitude that has read her books, who has not known and deplored the tragedy of her family, her own most sad and untimely fate? Which of her readers has not become her friend? Who that has known her books has not admired the artist's noble English, the burning love of truth, the bravery, the simplicity, the indignation at wrong, the eager sympathy, the pious love and reverence, the passionate honour, so to speak, of the woman? What a story is that of that family of poets in their solitude yonder on the gloomy northern moors! At nine o'clock at night, Mrs. Gaskell tells, after evening prayers, when their guardian and relative had gone to bed, the three poetesses—the three maidens, Charlotte, and Emily, and Anne—Charlotte being the 'motherly friend and guardian to the other two'—'began, like restless wild animals, to pace up and down their parlour, "making out" their wonderful stories, talking over plans and projects, and thoughts of what was to be their future life.'

One evening, at the close of 1854, as Charlotte Nicolls sat with her husband by the fire, listening to the howling of the wind about the house, she suddenly said to her husband, 'If you had not been with me, I must have been writing now.' She then ran upstairs, and brought down, and read aloud the beginning of a new tale When she had finished, her husband remarked, 'The critics will accuse you of repetition.' She replied, 'Oh! I shall alter that. I always begin two or three times before I can please myself.' But it was not to be. The trembling little hand was to write no more. The heart, newly awakened to love and happiness, and throbbing with maternal hope, was soon to cease to beat; that intrepid outspeaker and champion of truth, that eager, impetuous dreresser of wrong, was to be called out of the world's fight and struggle, to lay down the shining arms, and to be removed to a sphere where even a noble indignation *cor ulterius nequit lacerare,* and where truth complete, and right triumphant, no longer need to wage war.

I can only say of this lady, *vidi tantum.* I saw her first just as I rose out of an illness from which I had never thought to recover. I remember the trembling little frame, the little hand, the great honest eyes. An impetuous honesty seemed to me to characterise the woman. Twice I recollect she took me to task for what she held to be errors in doctrine. Once about Fielding we had a disputation. She spoke her mind out. She jumped too rapidly to conclusions. (I have smiled at one or two passages in the 'Biography,' in which my own disposition or behaviour forms the subject of talk.) She formed conclusions that might be wrong, and built up whole theories of character upon them. New to the London world, she entered it with an independent, indomitable spirit of her own; and judged of contemporaries, and especially spied out arrogance or affectation, with extraordinary keenness of vision. She was angry with her favourites if their conduct or conversation fell below her ideal. Often she seemed to me to be judging the London folk prematurely: but perhaps the city is rather angry at being judged. I fancied an austere little Joan of Arc marching in upon us, and rebuking our easy lives, our easy morals. She gave me the impression of being a very pure, and lofty, and high-minded person. A great and holy reverence of right and truth seemed to be with her always. Such, in our brief interview, she appeared to me. As one thinks of that life so noble, so lonely—of that passion for truth—of those nights and nights of eager study, swarming fancies, invention, depression, elation, prayer; as one reads the necessarily incomplete, though most touching and admirable history of the heart that throbbed in this one little frame—of this one amongst the myriads of souls that have lived and died on this great earth—this great earth?—this little speck in the infinite universe of God,—with what wonder do we think of to-day, with what awe await to-morrow, when that which is now but darkly seen shall be clear! As I read this little fragmentary sketch, I think of the rest. Is it? And where is it? Will not the leaf be turned some day, and the story be told? Shall the deviser of the tale somewhere perfect the history of little EMMA's griefs and troubles? Shall TITANIA come forth complete with her sportive court, with the flowers at her feet, the forest around her, and all the stars of summer glittering overhead?

How well I remember the delight, and wonder, and pleasure with which I read 'Jane Eyre,' sent to me by an author whose name and sex were then alike unknown to me; the strange fascinations of the book; and how with my own work pressing upon me, I could not, having taken the volumes up, lay them down until they were read through! Hundreds of those who, like myself, recognised and admired that master-work of a great genius, will look with a mournful interest and regard and curiosity upon this, the last fragmentary sketch from the noble hand which wrote 'Jane Eyre.'

W. M. T.]

EMMA

CHAPTER I

We all seek an ideal in life. A pleasant fancy began to visit me in a certain year, that perhaps the number of human beings is few who do not find their quest at some era of life for some space more or less brief. I had certainly not found mine in youth, though the strong belief I held of its existence sufficed through all my brightest and freshest time to keep me hopeful. I had not found it in maturity. I was become resigned never to find it. I had lived certain dim years entirely tranquil and unexpectant. And now I was not sure but something was hovering round my hearth which pleased me wonderfully.

Look at it, reader. Come into my parlour and judge for yourself whether I do right to care for this thing. First, you may scan me, if you please. We shall go on better together after a satisfactory introduction and due apprehension of identity. My name is Mrs. Chalfont. I am a widow. My house is good, and my income such as need not check the impulse either of charity or a moderate hospitality. I am not young nor yet old. There is no silver yet in my hair, but its yellow lustre is gone. In my face wrinkles are yet to come, but I have almost forgotten the days when it wore any bloom. I married when I was very young. I lived for fifteen years a life which, whatever its trials, could not be called stagnant. Then for five years I was alone, and, having no children, desolate. Lately Fortune, by a somewhat curious turn of her wheel, placed in my way an interest and a companion.

The neighbourhood where I live is pleasant enough, its scenery agreeable, and its society civilised, though not numerous. About a mile from my house there is a ladies' school, established but lately—not more than three years since. The conductresses of this school were of my acquaintances; and though I cannot say that they occupied the very highest place in my opinion—for they had brought back from some months' residence abroad, for finishing purposes, a good deal that was fantastic, affected, and pretentious—yet I awarded them some portion of that respect which seems the fair due of all women who face life bravely, and try to make their own way by their own efforts.

About a year after the Misses Wilcox opened their school, when the number of their pupils was as yet exceedingly limited, and when, no doubt, they were looking out anxiously enough for augmentation, the entrance-gate to their little drive was one day thrown back to admit a carriage—'a very handsome, fashionable carriage,' Miss Mabel Wilcox said, in narrating the circumstance afterwards—and drawn by a pair of really splendid horses. The sweep up the drive, the loud ring at the door-bell, the bustling entrance into the house, the ceremonious admission to the bright drawing-room, roused excitement enough in Fuchsia Lodge. Miss Wilcox repaired to the reception-room in a pair of new gloves, and carrying in her hand a handkerchief of French cambric.

She found a gentleman seated on the sofa, who, as he rose up, appeared a tall, fine-looking personage; at least she thought him so, as he stood with his back to the light. He introduced himself as Mr. Fitzgibbon, inquired if Miss Wilcox had a vacancy, and intimated that he wished to intrust to her care a new pupil in the shape of his daughter. This was welcome news, for there was many a vacancy in Miss Wilcox's school-room; indeed, her establishment was as yet limited to the select number of three, and she and her sisters were looking forward with anything but confidence to the balancing of accounts at the close of their first half-year. Few objects could have been more agreeable to her then than that to which, by a wave of the hand, Mr. Fitzgibbon now directed her attention—the figure of a child standing near the drawing-room window.

Had Miss Wilcox's establishment boasted fuller ranks—had she indeed entered well on that course of prosperity which in after years an undeviating attention to externals enabled her so triumphantly to realise—an early thought with her would have been to judge whether the acquisition now offered was likely to answer well as a show-pupil. She would have instantly marked her look, dress, &c., and inferred her value from these *indicia*. In those anxious commencing times, however, Miss Wilcox could scarce afford herself the luxury of such appreciation: a new pupil represented 40*l*. a year, independently of masters' terms—and 40*l*. a year was a sum Miss Wilcox needed and was glad to secure; besides, the fine carriage, the fine gentleman, and the fine name gave gratifying assurance, enough and to spare, of eligibility in the proffered connection. It was admitted, then, that there were vacancies in Fuchsia Lodge; that Miss Fitzgibbon could be received at once; that she was to learn all that the school prospectus proposed to teach; to be liable to every extra: in short, to be as expensive, and consequently as profitable a pupil, as any directress's heart could wish. All this was arranged as upon velvet, smoothly and liberally. Mr. Fitzgibbon showed in the transaction none of the hardness of the bargain-making man of business, and as little of the penurious anxiety of the straitened professional man. Miss Wilcox felt him to be 'quite the gentleman.' Everything disposed her to be partially inclined towards the little girl whom he, on taking leave, formally committed to her guardianship: and as if no circumstance should be wanting to complete her happy impression, the address left written on a card served to fill up the measure of Miss Wilcox's satisfaction—Conway Fitzgibbon, Esq., May Park, Midland County. That very day three decrees were passed in the new-comer's favour:—

1st. That she was to be Miss Wilcox's bed-fellow.

2nd. To sit next her at table.

3rd. To walk out with her.

In a few days it became evident that a fourth secret clause had been added to these, viz. that Miss Fitzgibbon was to be favoured, petted, and screened on all possible occasions.

An ill-conditioned pupil, who before coming to Fuchsia Lodge had passed a year under the care of certain old-fashioned Misses Sterling, of Hartwood, and from them had picked up unpractical notions of justice, took it upon her to utter an opinion on this system of favouritism.

'The Misses Sterling,' she injudiciously said, 'never distinguished any girl because she was richer or better dressed than the rest. They would have scorned to do so. *They* always rewarded girls according as they behaved well to their school-fellows and minded their lessons, not according to the number of their silk dresses, and fine laces and feathers.'

For it must not be forgotten that Miss Fitzgibbon's trunks, when opened, disclosed a splendid wardrobe; so fine were the various articles of apparel, indeed, that instead of assigning for their accommodation the painted deal drawers of the school bedroom, Miss Wilcox had them arranged in a mahogany bureau in her own room. With her own hands, too, she would on Sundays array the little favourite in her quilted silk pelisse, her hat and feathers, her ermine boa, and little French boots and gloves. And very self-complacent she felt when she led the young heiress (a letter from Mr. Fitzgibbon, received since his first visit, had communicated the additional particulars that his daughter was his only child, and would be the inheritress of his estates, including May Park, Midland County)—when she led her, I say, into the church, and seated her stately by her side at the top of the gallery-pew. Unbiassed observers might, indeed, have wondered what there was to be proud of, and puzzled their heads to detect the special merits of this little woman in silk

—for, to speak truth, Miss Fitzgibbon was far from being the beauty of the school: there were two or three blooming little faces amongst her companions lovelier than hers. Had she been a poor child, Miss Wilcox herself would not have liked her physiognomy at all: rather, indeed, would it have repelled than attracted her; and, moreover—though Miss Wilcox hardly confessed the circumstance to herself, but, on the contrary, strove hard not to be conscious of it—there were moments when she became sensible of a certain strange weariness in continuing her system of partiality. It hardly came natural to her to show this special distinction in this particular instance. An undefined wonder would smite her sometimes that she did not take more real satisfaction in flattering and caressing this embryo heiress—that she did not like better to have her always at her side, under her special charge. On principle Miss Wilcox continued the plan she had begun. On *principle*, for she argued with herself: This is the most aristocratic and richest of my pupils; she brings me the most credit and the most profit: therefore, I ought in justice to show her a special indulgence; which she did—but with a gradually increasing peculiarity of feeling.

Certainly, the undue favours showered on little Miss Fitzgibbon brought their object no real benefit. Unfitted for the character of playfellow by her position of favourite, her fellow-pupils rejected her company as decidedly as they dared. Active rejection was not long necessary; it was soon seen that passive avoidance would suffice; the pet was not social. No: even Miss Wilcox never thought her social. When she sent for her to show her fine clothes in the drawing-room when there was company, and especially when she had her into her parlour of an evening to be her own companion, Miss Wilcox used to feel curiously perplexed. She would try to talk affably to the young heiress, to draw her out, to amuse her. To herself the governess could render no reason why her efforts soon flagged; but this was invariably the case. However, Miss Wilcox was a woman of courage; and be the *protégée* what she might, the patroness did not fail to continue on *principle* her system of preference.

A favourite has no friends; and the observation of a gentleman, who about this time called at the Lodge and chanced to see Miss Fitzgibbon, was, 'That child looks consummately unhappy:' he was watching Miss Fitzgibbon, as she walked, by herself, fine and solitary, while her school-fellows were merrily playing.

'Who is the miserable little wight?' he asked.

He was told her name and dignity.

'Wretched little soul!' he repeated; and he watched her pace down the walk and back again; marching upright, her hands in her ermine muff, her fine pelisse showing a gay sheen to the winter's sun, her large Leghorn hat shading such a face as fortunately had not its parallel on the premises.

'Wretched little soul!' reiterated this gentleman. He opened the drawing-room window, watched the bearer of the muff till he caught her eye; and then summoned her with his finger. She came; he stooped his head down to her; she lifted her face up to him.

'Don't you play, little girl?'

'No, sir.'

'No! Why not? Do you think yourself better than other children?'

No answer.

'Is it because people tell you you are rich, you won't play?'

The young lady was gone. He stretched his hand to arrest her, but she wheeled beyond his reach, and ran quickly out of sight.

'An only child,' pleaded Miss Wilcox; 'possibly spoiled by her papa, you know; we must excuse a little pettishness.'

'Humph! I am afraid there is not a little to excuse.'

CHAPTER II

Mr. Ellin—the gentleman mentioned in the last chapter—was a man who went where he liked, and being a gossiping, leisurely person, he liked to go almost anywhere. He could not be rich, he lived so quietly; and yet he must have had some money, for, without apparent profession, he continued to keep a house and a servant. He always spoke of himself as having once been a worker; but if so, that could not have been very long since, for he still looked far from old. Sometimes of an evening, under a little social conversational excitement, he would look quite young; but he was changeable in mood, and complexion, and expression, and had chameleon eyes, sometimes blue and merry, sometimes grey and dark, and anon green and gleaming. On the whole he might be called a fair man, of average height, rather thin and rather wiry. He had not resided more than two years in the present neighbourhood; his antecedents were unknown there; but as the Rector, a man of good family and standing, and of undoubted scrupulousness in the choice of acquaintance, had introduced him, he found everywhere a prompt reception, of which nothing in his conduct had yet seemed to prove him unworthy. Some people, indeed, dubbed him 'a character,' and fancied him 'eccentric'; but others could not see the appropriateness of the epithets. He always seemed to them very harmless and quiet, not always perhaps so perfectly unreserved and comprehensible as might be wished. He had a discomposing expression in his eye; and sometimes in conversation an ambiguous diction; but still they believed he meant no harm.

Mr. Ellin often called on the Misses Wilcox; he sometimes took tea with them; he appeared to like tea and muffins, and not to dislike the kind of conversation which usually accompanies that refreshment; he was said to be a good shot, a good angler.—He proved himself an excellent gossip—he liked gossip well. On the whole he liked women's society, and did not seem to be particular in requiring difficult accomplishments or rare endowments in his female acquaintance. The Misses Wilcox, for instance, were not much less shallow than the china saucer which held their teacups; yet Mr. Ellin got on perfectly well with them, and had apparently great pleasure in hearing them discuss all the details of their school. He knew the names of all their young ladies too, and would shake hands with them if he met them walking out; he knew their examination days and gala days, and more than once accompanied Mr. Cecil, the curate, when he went to examine in ecclesiastical history.

This ceremony took place weekly, on Wednesday afternoons, after which Mr. Cecil sometimes stayed to tea, and usually found two or three lady parishioners invited to meet him. Mr. Ellin was also pretty sure to be there. Rumour gave one of the Misses Wilcox in anticipated wedlock to the curate, and furnished his friend with a second in the same tender relation; so that it is to be conjectured they made a social, pleasant party under such interesting circumstances. Their evenings rarely passed without Miss Fitzgibbon being introduced—all worked muslin and streaming sash and elaborated ringlets; others of the pupils would also be called in, perhaps to sing, to show off a little at the piano, or sometimes to repeat poetry. Miss Wilcox conscientiously cultivated display in her young ladies, thinking she thus fulfilled a duty to herself and to them, at once spreading her own fame and giving the children self-possessed manners.

It was curious to note how, on these occasions, good, genuine natural qualities still vindicated their superiority to counterfeit, artificial advantages. While 'dear Miss Fitzgibbon,' dressed up and flattered as she was, could only sidle round the circle with the crestfallen air which seemed natural to her, just giving her hand to the guests, then, almost snatching it away, and sneaking in unmannerly haste to the place allotted to her at Miss Wilcox's side, which place she filled like a piece of furniture, neither smiling nor speaking the evening through—while such was *her* deportment, certain of her companions, as Mary Franks, Jessy Newton, &c., handsome, open-countenanced little damsels—fearless because harmless—would enter with a smile of salutation and a blush of pleasure, make their pretty reverence at the drawing-room door, stretch a friendly little hand to such visitors as they knew, and sit down to the piano to play their well-practised duet with an innocent, obliging readiness which won all hearts.

There was a girl called Diana—the girl alluded to before as having once been Miss Sterling's pupil—a daring, brave girl, much loved and a little feared by her comrades. She had good faculties, both physical and mental—was clever, honest, and dauntless. In the schoolroom she set her young brow like a rock against Miss Fitzgibbon's pretensions; she found also heart and spirit to withstand them in the drawing-room. One evening, when the curate had been summoned away by some piece of duty directly after tea, and there was no stranger present but Mr. Ellin, Diana had been called in to play a long, difficult piece of music which she could execute like a master. She was still in the midst of her performance, when—Mr. Ellin having for the first time, perhaps, recognised the existence of the heiress by asking if she was cold—Miss Wilcox took the opportunity of launching into a strain of commendation on Miss Fitzgibbon's inanimate behaviour, terming it lady-like, modest, and exemplary. Whether Miss Wilcox's constrained tone betrayed how far she was from really feeling the approbation she expressed, how entirely she spoke from a sense of duty, and not because she felt it possible to be in any degree charmed by the personage she praised—or whether Diana, who was by nature hasty, had a sudden fit of irritability—is not quite certain, but she turned on her music-stool.

'Ma'am,' said she to Miss Wilcox, 'that girl does not deserve so much praise. Her behaviour is not at all exemplary. In the schoolroom she is insolently distant. For my part I denounce her airs; there is not one of us but is as good or better than she, though we may not be as rich.'

And Diana shut up the piano, took her music-book under her arm, curtsied, and vanished.

Strange to relate, Miss Wilcox said not a word at the time; nor was Diana subsequently reprimanded for this outbreak. Miss Fitzgibbon had now been three months in the school, and probably the governess had had leisure to wear out her early raptures of partiality.

Indeed, as time advanced, this evil often seemed likely to right itself; again and again it seemed that Miss Fitzgibbon was about to fall to her proper level, but then, somewhat provokingly to the lovers of reason and justice, some little incident would occur to invest her insignificance with artificial interest. Once it was the arrival of a great basket of hothouse fruit—melons, grapes, and pines—as a present to Miss Wilcox in Miss Fitzgibbon's name. Whether it was that a share of these luscious productions was imparted too freely to the nominal donor, or whether she had had a surfeit of cake on Miss Mabel Wilcox's birthday, it so befell, that in some disturbed state of the digestive organs Miss Fitzgibbon took to sleep-walking. She one night terrified the school into a panic by passing through the bedrooms, all white in her night-dress, moaning and holding out her hands as she went.

Dr. Percy was then sent for; his medicines, probably, did not suit the case; for within a fortnight after the somnambulistic feat, Miss Wilcox going upstairs in the dark, trod on something which she thought was the cat, and on calling for a light, found her darling Matilda Fitzgibbon curled round on the landing, blue, cold, and stiff, without any light in her half-open eyes, or any colour in her lips, or movement in her limbs. She was not soon roused from this fit; her senses seemed half scattered; and Miss Wilcox had now an undeniable excuse for keeping her all day on the drawing-room sofa, and making more of her than ever.

There comes a day of reckoning both for petted heiresses and partial governesses.

One clear winter morning, as Mr. Ellin was seated at breakfast, enjoying his bachelor's easy-chair and damp, fresh London newspaper, a note was brought to him marked 'private,' and 'in haste.' The last injunction was vain, for William Ellin did nothing in haste—he had no haste in him; he wondered anybody should be so foolish as to hurry; life was short enough without it. He looked at the little note—three-cornered, scented, and feminine. He knew the handwriting; it came from the very lady Rumour had so often assigned him as his own. The bachelor took out a morocco case, selected from a variety of little instruments a pair of tiny scissors, cut round the seal, and read:—'Miss Wilcox's compliments to Mr. Ellin, and she should be truly glad to see him for a few minutes, if at leisure. Miss W. requires a little advice. She will reserve explanations till she sees Mr. E.'

Mr. Ellin very quietly finished his breakfast; then, as it was a very fine December day—hoar and crisp, but serene, and not bitter—he carefully prepared himself for the cold, took his cane, and set out. He liked the walk; the air was still; the sun not wholly ineffectual; the path firm, and but lightly powdered with snow. He made his journey as long as he could by going round through many fields, and through winding, unfrequented lanes. When there was a tree in the way conveniently placed for support, he would sometimes stop, lean his back against the trunk, fold his arms, and muse. If Rumour could have seen him, she would have affirmed that he was thinking about Miss Wilcox; perhaps when he arrives at the Lodge his demeanour will inform us whether such an idea be warranted.

At last he stands at the door and rings the bell; he is admitted, and shown into the parlour—a smaller and a more private room than the drawing-room. Miss Wilcox occupies it; she is seated at her writing-table; she rises—not without air and grace—to receive her visitor. This air and grace she learnt in France; for she was in a Parisian school for six months, and learnt there a little French, and a stock of gestures and courtesies. No: it is certainly not impossible that Mr. Ellin may admire Miss Wilcox. She is not without prettiness, any more than are her sisters; and she and they are one and all smart and showy. Bright stone-blue is a colour they like in dress; a crimson bow rarely fails to be pinned on somewhere to give contrast; positive colours generally—grass-greens, red violets, deep yellows—are in favour with them; all harmonies are at a discount. Many people would think Miss Wilcox, standing there in her blue merino dress and pomegranate ribbon, a very agreeable woman. She has regular features; the nose is a little sharp, the lips a little thin, good complexion, light red hair. She is very business-like, very practical; she never in her life knew a refinement of feeling or of thought; she is entirely limited, respectable, and self-satisfied. She has a cool, prominent eye; sharp and shallow pupil, unshrinking and inexpansive; pale irid; light eyelashes, light brow. Miss Wilcox is a very proper and decorous person; but she could not be delicate or modest, because she is naturally destitute of sensitiveness. Her voice, when she speaks, has no vibration; her face no expression; her manner no emotion. Blush or tremor she never knew.

'What can I do for you, Miss Wilcox?' says Mr. Ellin, approaching the writing-table, and taking a chair beside it.

'Perhaps you can advise me,' was the answer; 'or perhaps you can give me some information. I feel so thoroughly puzzled, and really fear all is not right.'

'Where? and how?'

'I will have redress if it be possible,' pursued the lady; 'but how to set about obtaining it! Draw to the fire, Mr. Ellin; it is a cold day.'

They both drew to the fire. She continued, 'You know the Christmas holidays are near?'

He nodded.

'Well, about a fortnight since, I wrote, as is customary, to the friends of my pupils, notifying the day when we break up, and requesting that, if it was desired that any girl should stay the vacation, intimation should be sent accordingly. Satisfactory and prompt answers came to all the notes except one—that addressed to Conway Fitzgibbon, Esquire, May Park, Midland County—Matilda Fitzgibbon's father, you know.'

'What? won't he let her go home?'

'Let her go home, my dear sir! You shall hear. Two weeks elapsed, during which I daily expected an answer; none came. I felt annoyed at the delay, as I had particularly requested a speedy reply. This very morning I had made up my mind to write again, when—what do you think the post brought me?'

'I should like to know.'

'My own letter—actually my own—returned from the post-office with an intimation—such an intimation!—but read for yourself.'

She handed to Mr. Ellin an envelope; he took from it the returned note and a paper—the paper bore a hastily-scrawled line or two. It said, in brief terms, that there was no such place in Midland County as May Park, and that no such person had ever been heard of there as Conway Fitzgibbon, Esquire.

On reading this Mr. Ellin slightly opened his eyes.

'I hardly thought it was so bad as this,' said he.

'What? you did think it was bad then? You suspected that something was wrong?'

'Really! I scarcely knew what I thought or suspected. How very odd, no such place as May Park! The grand mansion, the grounds, the oaks, the deer, vanished clean away. And then Fitzgibbon himself! But you saw Fitzgibbon—he came in his carriage?'

'In his carriage!' echoed Miss Wilcox; 'a most stylish equipage, and himself a most distinguished person. Do you think, after all, there is some mistake?'

'Certainly, a mistake; but when it is rectified I don't think Fitzgibbon or May Park will be forthcoming. Shall I run down to Midland County and look after these two precious objects?'

'Oh! would you be so good, Mr. Ellin? I knew you would be so kind; personal inquiry, you know—there's nothing like it.'

'Nothing at all. Meantime, what shall you do with the child—the pseudo-heiress, if pseudo she be? Shall you correct her—let her know her place?'

'I think,' responded Miss Wilcox, reflectively—'I think not exactly as yet; my plan is to do nothing in a hurry; we will inquire first. If after all she should turn out to be connected as was at first supposed, one had better not do anything which one might afterwards regret. No; I shall make no difference with her till I hear from you again.'

'Very good. As you please,' said Mr. Ellin, with that coolness which made him so convenient a counsellor in Miss Wilcox's opinion. In his dry laconism she found the response suited to her outer worldliness. She thought he said enough if he did not oppose her. The comment he stinted so avariciously she did not want.

Mr. Ellin 'ran down,' as he said, to Midland County. It was an errand that seemed to suit him; for he had curious predilections as well as peculiar methods of his own. Any secret quest was to his taste; perhaps there was something of the amateur detective in him. He could conduct an inquiry and draw no attention. His quiet face never looked inquisitive, nor did his sleepless eye betray vigilance.

He was away about a week. The day after his return he appeared in Miss Wilcox's presence as cool as if he had seen her but yesterday. Confronting her with that fathomless face he liked to show her, he first told her he had done nothing.

Let Mr. Ellin be as enigmatical as he would, he never puzzled Miss Wilcox. She never saw enigma in the man. Some people feared, because they did not understand, him; to her it had not yet occurred to begin to spell his nature or analyse his character. If she had an impression about him, it was, that he was an idle but obliging man, not aggressive, of few words, but often convenient. Whether he were clever and deep, or deficient and shallow, close or open, odd or ordinary, she saw no practical end to be answered by inquiry, and therefore did not inquire.

'Why had he done nothing?' she now asked.

'Chiefly because there was nothing to do.'

'Then he could give her no information?'

'Not much: only this, indeed—Conway Fitzgibbon was a man of straw; May Park a house of cards. There was no vestige of such man or mansion in Midland County, or in any other shire in England. Tradition herself had nothing to say about either the name or the place. The Oracle of old deeds and registers, when consulted, had not responded.'

'Who can he be, then, that came here, and who is this child?'

'That's just what I can't tell you:—an incapacity which makes me say I have done nothing.'

'And how am I to get paid?'

'Can't tell you that either.'

'A quarter's board and education owing, and masters' terms besides,' pursued Miss Wilcox. 'How infamous! I can't afford the loss.'

'And if we were only in the good old times,' said Mr. Ellin, 'where we ought to be, you might just send Miss Matilda out to the plantations in Virginia, sell her for what she is worth, and pay yourself.'

'Matilda, indeed, and Fitzgibbon! A little impostor! I wonder what her real name is?'

'Betty Hodge? Poll Smith? Hannah Jones?' suggested Mr. Ellin.

'Now,' cried Miss Wilcox, 'give me credit for sagacity.

It's very odd, but try as I would—and I made every effort—I never could really like that child. She has had every indulgence in this house; and I am sure I made great sacrifice of feeling to principle in showing her much attention; for I could not make anyone believe the degree of antipathy I have all along felt towards her.'

'Yes. I can believe it. I saw it.'

'Did you? Well—it proves that my discernment is rarely at fault. Her game is up now, however; and time it was. I have said nothing to her yet; but now——'

'Have her in whilst I am here,' said Mr. Ellin, 'Has she known of this business? Is she in the secret? Is she herself an accomplice, or a mere tool? Have her in.'

Miss Wilcox rang the bell, demanded Matilda Fitzgibbon, and the false heiress soon appeared. She came in her ringlets, her sash, and her furbelowed dress adornments—alas! no longer acceptable.

'Stand there!' said Miss Wilcox, sternly, checking her as she approached the hearth. 'Stand there on the farther side of the table. I have a few questions to put to you, and your business will be to answer them. And mind—let us have the truth. *We will not endure lies.*'

Ever since Miss Fitzgibbon had been found in the fit her face had retained a peculiar paleness and her eyes a dark orbit. When thus addressed she began to shake and blanch like conscious guilt personified.

'Who are you?' demanded Miss Wilcox. 'What do you know about yourself?'

A sort of half-interjection escaped the girl's lips; it was a sound expressing partly fear, and partly the shock the nerves feel when an evil, very long expected, at last and suddenly arrives.

'Keep yourself still, and reply, if you please,' said Miss Wilcox, whom nobody should blame for lacking pity, because nature had not made her compassionate. 'What is your name? We know you have no right to that of Matilda Fitzgibbon.'

She gave no answer.

'I do insist upon a reply. Speak you shall, sooner or later. So you had better do it at once.'

This inquisition had evidently a very strong effect upon the subject of it. She stood as if palsied, trying to speak, but apparently not competent to articulate.

Miss Wilcox did not fly into a passion, but she grew very stern and urgent; spoke a little loud; and there was a dry clamour in her raised voice which seemed to beat upon the ear and bewilder the brain. Her interest had been injured—her pocket wounded—she was vindicating her rights—and she had no eye to see, and no nerve to feel, but for the point in hand. Mr. Ellin appeared to consider himself strictly a looker-on; he stood on the hearth very quiet.

At last the culprit spoke. A low voice escaped her lips. 'Oh, my head!' she cried, lifting her hands to her forehead. She staggered, but caught the door and did not fall. Some accusers might have been startled by such a cry—even silenced; not so Miss Wilcox. She was neither cruel nor violent; but she was coarse, because insensible. Having just drawn breath, she went on, harsh as ever.

Mr. Ellin, leaving the hearth, deliberately paced up the room as if he were tired of standing still, and would walk a little for a change. In returning and passing near the door and the criminal, a faint breath seemed to seek his ear, whispering his name—

'Oh, Mr. Ellin!'

The child dropped as she spoke. A curious voice—not like Mr. Ellin's, though it came from his lips—asked Miss Wilcox to cease speaking, and say no more. He gathered from the floor what had fallen on it. She seemed overcome, but not unconscious. Resting beside Mr. Ellin, in a few minutes she again drew breath. She raised her eyes to him.

'Come, my little one; have no fear,' said he.

Reposing her head against him, she gradually became reassured. It did not cost him another word to bring her round ; even that strong trembling was calmed by the mere effects of his protection. He told Miss Wilcox, with remarkable tranquillity, but still with a certain decision, that the little girl must be put to bed. He carried her up-stairs, and saw her laid there himself. Returning to Miss Wilcox, he said, 'Say no more to her. Beware, or you will do more mischief than you think or wish. That kind of nature is very different from yours. It is not possible that you should like it ; but let it alone. We will talk more on the subject to-morrow. Let me question her.'

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POEMS

BY

CURRER, ELLIS, AND ACTON BELL

Facsimile of the Title-page of the First Edition.

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POEMS BY CURRER BELL

PILATE'S WIFE'S DREAM

I'VE quench'd my lamp, I struck it in that start
  Which every limb convulsed, I heard it fall—
The crash blent with my sleep, I saw depart
  Its light, even as I woke, on yonder wall:
Over against my bed, there shone a gleam
Strange, faint, and mingling also with my dream.

It sank, and I am wrapt in utter gloom;
  How far is night advanced, and when will day
Re-tinge the dusk and livid air with bloom,
  And fill this void with warm, creative ray?
Would I could sleep again till, clear and red,
Morning shall on the mountain-tops be spread!

I'd call my women, but to break their sleep,
  Because my own is broken, were unjust;
They've wrought all day, and well-earn'd slumbers steep
  Their labours in forgetfulness, I trust:
Let me my feverish watch with patience bear,
Thankful that none with me its sufferings share.

Yet oh! for light! one ray would tranquillise
  My nerves, my pulses, more than effort can;
I'll draw my curtain and consult the skies:
  These trembling stars at dead of night look wan,
Wild, restless, strange, yet cannot be more drear
Than this my couch, shared by a nameless fear.

All black—one great cloud, drawn from east to west,
Conceals the heavens, but there are lights below;
Torches burn in Jerusalem, and cast
On yonder stony mount a lurid glow.
I see men station'd there, and gleaming spears;
A sound, too, from afar, invades my ears.

Dull, measured strokes of axe and hammer ring
From street to street, not loud, but through the night
Distinctly heard—and some strange spectral thing
Is now uprear'd—and, fix'd against the light
Of the pale lamps, defined upon that sky,
It stands up like a column, straight and high

I see it all—I know the dusky sign—
A cross on Calvary, which Jews uprear
While Romans watch; and when the dawn shall shine
Pilate, to judge the victim, will appear—
Pass sentence—yield Him up to crucify;
And on that cross the spotless Christ must die.

Dreams, then, are true—for thus my vision ran;
Surely some oracle has been with me,
The gods have chosen me to reveal their plan,
To warn an unjust judge of destiny:
I, slumbering, heard and saw; awake I know,
Christ's coming death, and Pilate's life of woe.

I do not weep for Pilate—who could prove
Regret for him whose cold and crushing sway
No prayer can soften, no appeal can move;
Who tramples hearts as others trample clay,
Yet with a faltering, an uncertain tread,
That might stir up reprisal in the dead.

Forced to sit by his side and see his deeds;
Forced to behold that visage, hour by hour,
In whose gaunt lines the abhorrent gazer reads
A triple lust of gold, and blood, and power;

A soul whom motives fierce, yet abject, urge—
Rome's servile slave, and Judah's tyrant scourge;

How can I love, or mourn, or pity him?
  I, who so long my fetter'd hands have wrung;
I, who for grief have wept my eyesight dim;
  Because, while life for me was bright and young,
He robb'd my youth—he quench'd my life's fair ray—
He crush'd my mind, and did my freedom slay.

And at this hour—although I be his wife—
  He has no more of tenderness from me
Than any other wretch of guilty life;
  Less, for I know his household privacy—
I see him as he is—without a screen;
And, by the gods, my soul abhors his mien!

Has he not sought my presence, dyed in blood—
  Innocent, righteous blood, shed shamelessly?
And have I not his red salute withstood?
  Ay, when, as erst, he plunged all Galilee
In dark bereavement—in affliction sore,
Mingling their very offerings with their gore.

Then came he—in his eyes a serpent-smile,
  Upon his lips some false, endearing word,
And through the streets of Salem clang'd the while
  His slaughtering, hacking, sacrilegious sword—
And I, to see a man cause men such woe,
Trembled with ire—I did not fear to show.

And now the envious Jewish priests have brought
  Jesus—whom they in mock'ry call their king—
To have, by this grim power, their vengeance wrought:
  By this mean reptile, innocence to sting.
Oh! could I but the purposed doom avert,
And shield the blameless head from cruel hurt!

Accessible is Pilate's heart to fear,
  Omens will shake his soul, like autumn leaf;
Could he this night's appalling vision hear,
  This just man's bonds were loosed, his life were safe,
Unless that bitter priesthood should prevail,
And make even terror to their malice quail.

Yet if I tell the dream—but let me pause.
  What dream? Erewhile the characters were clear,
Graved on my brain—at once some unknown cause
  Has dimm'd and razed the thoughts, which now appear,
Like a vague remnant of some by-past scene;—
Not what will be, but what, long since, has been.

I suffer'd many things—I heard foretold
  A dreadful doom for Pilate,—lingering woes,
In far barbarian climes, where mountains cold
  Built up a solitude of trackless snows:
There he and grisly wolves prowl'd side by side,
There he lived famish'd—there, methought, he died;

But not of hunger, nor by malady;
  I saw the snow around him, stain'd with gore;
I said I had no tears for such as he,
  And lo! my cheek is wet—mine eyes run o'er.
I weep for mortal suffering, mortal guilt,
I weep the impious deed, the blood self-spilt.

More I recall not, yet the vision spread
  Into a world remote, an age to come—
And still the illumined name of Jesus shed
  A light, a clearness, through the unfolding gloom—
And still I saw that sign, which now I see,
That cross on yonder brow of Calvary.

What is this Hebrew Christ?—to me unknown
  His lineage—doctrine—mission; yet how clear
Is god-like goodness in his actions shown,
  How straight and stainless is his life's career!

The ray of Deity that rests on him,
In my eyes makes Olympian glory dim.

The world advances; Greek or Roman rite
  Suffices not the inquiring mind to stay;
The searching soul demands a purer light
  To guide it on its upward, onward way;
Ashamed of sculptured gods, Religion turns
To where the unseen Jehovah's altar burns.

Our faith is rotten, all our rights defiled,
  Our temples sullied, and, methinks, this man,
With his new ordinance, so wise and mild,
  Is come, even as He says, the chaff to fan
And sever from the wheat; but will his faith
Survive the terrors of to-morrow's death?

* * * * *

I feel a firmer trust—a higher hope
  Rise in my soul—it dawns with dawning day;
Lo! on the Temple's roof—on Moriah's slope
  Appears at length that clear and crimson ray
Which I so wished for when shut in by night;
Oh, opening skies, I hail, I bless your light!

Part, clouds and shadows! Glorious Sun appear!
  Part, mental gloom! Come insight from on high!
Dusk dawn in heaven still strives with daylight clear
  The longing soul doth still uncertain sigh.
Oh! to behold the truth—that sun divine,
How doth my bosom pant, my spirit pine!

This day, Time travails with a mighty birth;
This day, Truth stoops from heaven and visits earth;
Ere night descends I shall more surely know
What guide to follow, in what path to go;
I wait in hope—I wait in solemn fear,
The oracle of God—the sole—true God—to hear.

MEMENTOS

Arranging long-locked drawers and shelves
Of cabinets shut up for years,
What a strange task we've set ourselves!
How still the lonely room appears!
How strange this mass of ancient treasures,
Mementos of past pains and pleasures;
These volumes, clasped with costly stone,
With print all faded, gilding gone;

These fans of leaves, from Indian trees—
These crimson shells, from Indian seas—
These tiny portraits, set in rings—
Once, doubtless, deemed such precious things;
Keepsakes bestowed by Love on Faith,
And worn till the receiver's death,
Now stored with cameos, china, shells,
In this old closet's dusty cells.

I scarcely think, for ten long years,
A hand has touched these relics old;
And, coating each, slow-formed, appears
The growth of green and antique mould.

All in this house is mossing over;
All is unused, and dim, and damp;
Nor light, nor warmth, the rooms discover—
Bereft for years of fire and lamp.

The sun, sometimes in summer, enters
The casements, with reviving ray;
But the long rains of many winters
Moulder the very walls away.

And outside all is ivy, clinging
To chimney, lattice, gable grey;
Scarcely one little red rose springing
Through the green moss can force its way.

Unscared, the daw and starling nestle,
  Where the tall turret rises high,
And winds alone come near to rustle
  The thick leaves where their cradles lie.

I sometimes think, when late at even
  I climb the stair reluctantly,
Some shape that should be well in heaven,
  Or ill elsewhere, will pass by me.

I fear to see the very faces,
  Familiar thirty years ago,
Even in the old accustomed places
  Which look so cold and gloomy now.

I've come, to close the window, hither,
  At twilight, when the sun was down,
And Fear my very soul would wither,
  Lest something should be dimly shown,

Too much the buried form resembling,
  Of her who once was mistress here;
Lest doubtful shade, or moonbeam trembling,
  Might take her aspect, once so dear.

Hers was this chamber; in her time
  It seemed to me a pleasant room,
For then no cloud of grief or crime
  Had cursed it with a settled gloom;

I had not seen death's image laid
In shroud and sheet, on yonder bed.
  Before she married, she was blest—
Blest in her youth, blest in her worth;
  Her mind was calm, its sunny rest
Shone in her eyes more clear than mirth.

And when attired in rich array,
  Light, lustrous hair about her brow,
She yonder sat, a kind of day
  Lit up what seems so gloomy now.
These grim oak walls even then were grim;
  That old carved chair was then antique;
But what around looked dusk and dim
  Served as a foil to her fresh cheek;
Her neck and arms, of hue so fair,
  Eyes of unclouded, smiling light;
Her soft, and curled, and floating hair,
  Gems and attire, as rainbow bright.

Reclined in yonder deep recess,
  Ofttimes she would, at evening, lie
Watching the sun; she seemed to bless
  With happy glance the glorious sky.
She loved such scenes, and as she gazed,
  Her face evinced her spirit's mood;
Beauty or grandeur ever raised
  In her a deep-felt gratitude.

But of all lovely things, she loved
  A cloudless moon on summer night;
Full oft have I impatience proved
  To see how long her still delight
Would find a theme in reverie,
  Out on the lawn, or where the trees
Let in the lustre fitfully,
As their boughs parted momently
  To the soft, languid summer breeze.
Alas! that she should e'er have flung
  Those pure though lonely joys away:
Deceived by false and guileful tongue,
She gave her hand, then suffered wrong;
Oppressed, ill-used, she faded young,
  And died of grief by slow decay.

Open that casket—look how bright
Those jewels flash upon the sight;
The brilliants have not lost a ray
Of lustre since her wedding-day.
But see—upon that pearly chain—
How dim lies Time's discolouring stain
I've seen that by her daughter worn:
For, ere she died, a child was born;—
A child that ne'er its mother knew,
That lone, and almost friendless grew;
For, ever, when its step drew nigh,
Averted was the father's eye;
And then a life impure and wild
Made him a stranger to his child:
Absorbed in vice, he little cared
On what she did, or how she fared.
The love withheld she never sought,
She grew uncherished—learnt untaught;
To her the inward life of thought
  Full soon was open laid.
I know not if her friendlessness
Did sometimes on her spirit press,
  But plaint she never made.
The book-shelves were her darling treasure,
She rarely seemed the time to measure
  While she could read alone.
And she too loved the twilight wood,
And often, in her mother's mood,
  Away to yonder hill would hie,
Like her, to watch the setting sun,
Or see the stars born, one by one,
  Out of the darkening sky.
Nor would she leave that hill till night
Trembled from pole to pole with light;
  Even then, upon her homeward way,
Long—long her wandering steps delayed

To quit the sombre forest shade,
  Through which her eerie pathway lay.
You ask if she had beauty's grace?
I know not—but a nobler face
  My eyes have seldom seen;
A keen and fine intelligence,
And, better still, the truest sense
  Were in her speaking mien.
But bloom or lustre was there none,
Only at moments fitful shone
  An ardour in her eye,
That kindled on her cheek a flush,
Warm as a red sky's passing blush
  And quick with energy.
Her speech, too, was not common speech,
No wish to shine, or aim to teach,
  Was in her words displayed:
She still began with quiet sense,
But oft the force of eloquence
  Came to her lips in aid;
Language and voice unconscious changed,
And thoughts, in other words arranged,
  Her fervid soul transfused
Into the hearts of those who heard,
And transient strength and ardour stirred,
  In minds to strength unused:
Yet in gay crowd or festal glare,
Grave and retiring was her air;
'Twas seldom, save with me alone,
That fire of feeling freely shone;
She loved not awe's nor wonder's gaze,
Nor even exaggerated praise,
Nor even notice, if too keen
The curious gazer searched her mien.
Nature's own green expanse revealed
The world, the pleasures, she could prize;
On free hill-side, in sunny field,
In quiet spots by woods concealed,

Grew wild and fresh her chosen joys—
Yet Nature's feelings deeply lay
In that endowed and youthful frame;
Shrined in her heart and hid from day,
They burned unseen with silent flame.
In youth's first search for mental light,
She lived but to reflect and learn,
But soon her mind's maturer might
For stronger task did pant and yearn;
And stronger task did fate assign,
Task that a giant's strength might strain;
To suffer long and ne'er repine,
Be calm in frenzy, smile at pain.

Pale with the secret war of feeling,
Sustained with courage, mute yet high,
The wounds at which she bled revealing
Only by altered cheek and eye;

She bore in silence—but when passion
Surged in her soul with ceaseless foam,
The storm at last brought desolation,
And drove her exiled from her home;

And silent still, she straight assembled
The wrecks of strength her soul retained;
For though the wasted body trembled,
The unconquered mind, to quail, disdained.

She crossed the sea—now lone she wanders
By Seine's, or Rhine's, or Arno's flow:
Fain would I know if distance renders
Relief or comfort to her woe.

Fain would I know if, henceforth, ever,
These eyes shall read in hers again,
That light of love which faded never,
Though dimmed so long with secret pain.

She will return, but cold and altered,
  Like all whose hopes too soon depart;
Like all on whom have beat, unsheltered,
  The bitter blasts that blight the heart.

No more shall I behold her lying
  Calm on a pillow, smoothed by me;
No more that spirit, worn with sighing,
  Will know the rest of infancy.

If still the paths of lore she follow,
  'Twill be with tired and goaded will;
She'll only toil, the aching hollow,
  The joyless blank of life to fill.

And oh! full oft, quite spent and weary,
  Her hand will pause, her head decline;
That labour seems so hard and dreary,
  On which no ray of hope may shine.

Thus the pale blight of time and sorrow
  Will shade with grey her soft, dark hair;
Then comes the day that knows no morrow,
  And death succeeds to long despair.

So speaks experience, sage and hoary;
  I see it plainly, know it well,
Like one who, having read a story,
  Each incident therein can tell.

Touch not that ring; 'twas his, the sire
  Of that forsaken child;
And nought his relics can inspire
  Save memories sin-defiled.

I, who sat by his wife's death-bed,
  I, who his daughter loved,
Could almost curse the guilty dead,
  For woes the guiltless proved.

And heaven did curse—they found him laid,
  When crime for wrath was rife,
Cold—with the suicidal blade
  Clutched in his desperate gripe.

'Twas near that long-deserted hut,
  Which in the wood decays,
Death's axe, self-wielded, struck his root,
  And lopped his desperate days.

You know the spot, where three black trees,
  Lift up their branches fell,
And moaning, ceaseless as the seas,
Still seem, in every passing breeze,
  The deed of blood to tell.

They named him mad, and laid his bones
  Where holier ashes lie;
Yet doubt not that his spirit groans
  In hell's eternity.

But, lo! night, closing o'er the earth,
  Infects our thoughts with gloom;
Come, let us strive to rally mirth
Where glows a clear and tranquil hearth
  In some more cheerful room.

THE WIFE'S WILL

Sit still—a word—a breath may break
(As light airs stir a sleeping lake)
The glassy calm that soothes my woes—
The sweet, the deep, the full repose.
O leave me not! for ever be
Thus, more than life itself to me!

Yes, close beside thee let me kneel—
Give me thy hand, that I may feel
The friend so true—so tried—so dear,
My heart's own chosen—indeed is near;
And check me not—this hour divine
Belongs to me—is fully mine.

'Tis thy own hearth thou sitt'st beside,
After long absence—wandering wide;
'Tis thy own wife reads in thine eyes
A promise clear of stormless skies;
For faith and true love light the rays
Which shine responsive to her gaze.

Ay,—well that single tear may fall;
Ten thousand might mine eyes recall,
Which from their lids ran blinding fast,
In hours of grief, yet scarcely past;
Well may'st thou speak of love to me,
For, oh! most truly—I love thee!

Yet smile—for we are happy now.
Whence, then, that sadness on thy brow?
What sayest thou? 'We must once again,
Ere long, be severed by the main!'
I knew not this—I deemed no more
Thy step would err from Britain's shore.

'Duty commands!' 'Tis true—'tis just;
Thy slightest word I wholly trust,
Nor by request, nor faintest sigh,
Would I to turn thy purpose try;
But, William, hear my solemn vow—
Hear and confirm!—with thee I go.

'Distance and suffering,' didst thou say?
'Danger by night, and toil by day?'

Oh, idle words and vain are these;
Hear me! I cross with thee the seas.
Such risk as thou must meet and dare,
I—thy true wife—will duly share.

Passive, at home, I will not pine;
Thy toils, thy perils shall be mine;
Grant this—and be hereafter paid
By a warm heart's devoted aid:
'Tis granted—with that yielding kiss,
Entered my soul unmingled bliss.

Thanks, William, thanks! thy love has joy
Pure, undefiled with base alloy!
'Tis not a passion, false and blind,
Inspires, enchains, absorbs my mind;
Worthy, I feel, art thou to be
Loved with my perfect energy.

This evening now shall sweetly flow,
Lit by our clear fire's happy glow;
And parting's peace-embittering fear
Is warned our hearts to come not near;
For fate admits my soul's decree,
In bliss or bale—to go with thee!

THE WOOD

But two miles more, and then we rest!
  Well, there is still an hour of day,
And long the brightness of the West
  Will light us on our devious way;
Sit then, awhile, here in this wood—
So total is the solitude,
    We safely may delay.

These massive roots afford a seat,
Which seems for weary travellers made.
There rest. The air is soft and sweet
In this sequestered forest glade,
And there are scents of flowers around,
The evening dew draws from the ground;
How soothingly they spread!

Yes; I was tired, but not at heart;
No—that beats full of sweet content,
For now I have my natural part
Of action with adventure blent;
Cast forth on the wide world with thee,
And all my once waste energy
To weighty purpose bent.

Yet—say'st thou, spies around us roam,
Our aims are termed conspiracy?
Haply, no more our English home
An anchorage for us may be?
That there is risk our mutual blood
May redden in some lonely wood
The knife of treachery?

Say'st thou, that where we lodge each night,
In each lone farm, or lonelier hall
Of Norman Peer—ere morning light
Suspicion must as duly fall,
As day returns—such vigilance
Presides and watches over France,
Such rigour governs all?

I fear not, William; dost thou fear?
So that the knife does not divide,
It may be ever hovering near:
I could not tremble at thy side,

And strenuous love—like mine for thee—
Is buckler strong 'gainst treachery,
And turns its stab aside.

I am resolved that thou shalt learn
To trust my strength as I trust thine;
I am resolved our souls shall burn
With equal, steady, mingling shine;
Part of the field is conquered now,
Our lives in the same channel flow,
Along the self-same line;

And while no groaning storm is heard,
Thou seem'st content it should be so,
But soon as comes a warning word
Of danger—straight thine anxious brow
Bends over me a mournful shade,
As doubting if my powers are made
To ford the floods of woe.

Know, then it is my spirit swells,
And drinks, with eager joy, the air
Of freedom—where at last it dwells,
Chartered, a common task to share
With thee, and then it stirs alert,
And pants to learn what menaced hurt
Demands for thee its care.

Remember, I have crossed the deep,
And stood with thee on deck, to gaze
On waves that rose in threatening heap,
While stagnant lay a heavy haze,
Dimly confusing sea with sky,
And baffling, even, the pilot's eye,
Intent to thread the maze—

Of rocks, on Bretagne's dangerous coast,
  And find a way to steer our band
To the one point obscure, which lost,
  Flung us, as victims, on the strand;—
All, elsewhere, gleamed the Gallic sword,
And not a wherry could be moored
    Along the guarded land.

I feared not then—I fear not now;
  The interest of each stirring scene
Wakes a new sense, a welcome glow,
  In every nerve and bounding vein;
Alike on turbid Channel sea,
Or in still wood of Normandy,
    I feel as born again.

The rain descended that wild morn
  When, anchoring in the cove at last,
Our band, all weary and forlorn,
  Ashore, like wave-worn sailors, cast—
Sought for a sheltering roof in vain,
And scarce could scanty food obtain
    To break their morning fast.

Thou didst thy crust with me divide,
  Thou didst thy cloak around me fold;
And, sitting silent by thy side,
  I ate the bread in peace untold:
Given kindly from thy hand, 'twas sweet
As costly fare or princely treat
    On royal plate of gold.

Sharp blew the sleet upon my face,
  And, rising wild, the gusty wind
Drove on those thundering waves apace,
  Our crew so late had left behind;

But, spite of frozen shower and storm,
So close to thee, my heart beat warm,
And tranquil slept my mind.

So now—nor foot-sore nor opprest
With walking all this August day,
I taste a heaven in this brief rest,
This gipsy-halt beside the way.
England's wild flowers are fair to view,
Like balm is England's summer dew,
Like gold her sunset ray.

But the white violets, growing here,
Are sweeter than I yet have seen,
And ne'er did dew so pure and clear
Distil on forest mosses green,
As now, called forth by summer heat,
Perfumes our cool and fresh retreat—
These fragrant limes between.

That sunset! Look beneath the boughs,
Over the copse—beyond the hills;
How soft, yet deep and warm, it glows,
And heaven with rich suffusion fills;
With hues where still the opal's tint,
Its gleam of prisoned fire, is blent,
Where flame through azure thrills!

Depart we now—for fast will fade
That solemn splendour of decline,
And deep must be the after-shade,
As stars alone to-night will shine;
No moon is destined—pale—to gaze
On such a day's vast phœnix blaze,
A day in fires decayed!

There—hand-in-hand we tread again
  The mazes of this varying wood,
And soon, amid a cultured plain,
  Girt in with fertile solitude,
We shall our resting-place descry,
Marked by one roof-tree, towering high
      Above a farmstead rude.

Refreshed, ere long, with rustic fare,
  We'll seek a couch of dreamless ease;
Courage will guard thy heart from fear,
  And Love give mine divinest peace:
To-morrow brings more dangerous toil,
And through its conflict and turmoil
      We'll pass, as God shall please.

The preceding composition refers, doubtless, to the scenes acted in France during the last year of the Consulate.—C. B.

◆

FRANCES

She will not sleep, for fear of dreams,
  But, rising, quits her restless bed,
And walks where some beclouded beams
  Of moonlight through the hall are shed.

Obedient to the goad of grief,
  Her steps, now fast, now lingering slow,
In varying motion seek relief
  From the Eumenides of woe.

Wringing her hands, at intervals—
  But long as mute as phantom dim—
She glides along the dusky walls,
  Under the black oak rafters grim.

The close air of the grated tower
  Stifles a heart that scarce can beat,
And, though so late and lone the hour,
  Forth pass her wandering, faltering feet;

And on the pavement spread before
  The long front of the mansion grey,
Her steps imprint the night-frost hoar,
  Which pale on grass and granite lay.

Not long she stayed where misty moon
  And shimmering stars could on her look,
But through the garden archway soon
  Her strange and gloomy path she took.

Some firs, coëval with the tower,
  Their straight black boughs stretched o'er her head;
Unseen, beneath this sable bower,
  Rustled her dress and rapid tread.

There was an alcove in that shade,
  Screening a rustic seat and stand;
Weary she sat her down, and laid
  Her hot brow on her burning hand.

To solitude and to the night
  Some words she now, in murmurs, said;
And trickling through her fingers white,
  Some tears of misery she shed.

'God help me in my grievous need,
  God help me in my inward pain;
Which cannot ask for pity's meed,
  Which has no licence to complain;

'Which must be borne; yet who can bear,
  Hours long, days long, a constant weight—
The yoke of absolute despair,
  A suffering wholly desolate?

'Who can for ever crush the heart,
Restrain its throbbing, curb its life?
Dissemble truth with ceaseless art,
With outward calm mask inward strife?'

She waited—as for some reply;
The still and cloudy night gave none;
Ere long, with deep-drawn, trembling sigh,
Her heavy plaint again begun.

'Unloved—I love; unwept—I weep;
Grief I restrain—hope I repress:
Vain is this anguish—fixed and deep;
Vainer, desires and dreams of bliss:

'My love awakes no love again,
My tears collect, and fall unfelt;
My sorrow touches none with pain,
My humble hopes to nothing melt.

'For me the universe is dumb,
Stone-deaf, and blank, and wholly blind;
Life I must bound, existence sum
In the strait limits of one mind;

'That mind my own. Oh! narrow cell;
Dark—imageless—a living tomb!
There must I sleep, there wake and dwell
Content, with palsy, pain, and gloom.'

Again she paused; a moan of pain,
A stifled sob, alone was heard;
Long silence followed—then again
Her voice the stagnant midnight stirred:

'Must it be so? Is this my fate?
Can I nor struggle, nor contend?
And am I doomed for years to wait,
Watching death's lingering axe descend?

'And when it falls, and when I die,
What follows? Vacant nothingness?
The blank of lost identity?
Erasure both of pain and bliss?

'I've heard of heaven—I would believe;
For if this earth indeed be all,
Who longest lives may deepest grieve;
Most blest, whom sorrows soonest call.

'Oh! leaving disappointment here,
Will man find hope on yonder coast?
Hope, which, on earth, shines never clear,
And oft in clouds is wholly lost.

'Will he hope's source of light behold,
Fruition's spring, where doubts expire,
And drink, in waves of living gold,
Contentment, full, for long desire?

'Will he find bliss, which here he dreamed?
Rest, which was weariness on earth?
Knowledge, which, if o'er life it beamed,
Served but to prove it void of worth?

'Will he find love without lust's leaven,
Love fearless, tearless, perfect, pure,
To all with equal bounty given;
In all, unfeigned, unfailing, sure?

'Will he, from penal sufferings free,
Released from shroud and wormy clod,
All calm and glorious, rise and see
Creation's Sire—Existence' God?

'Then, glancing back on Time's brief woes,
Will he behold them, fading, fly;
Swept from Eternity's repose,
Like sullying cloud from pure blue sky?

'If so, endure, my weary frame;
And when thy anguish strikes too deep,
And when all troubled burns life's flame,
Think of the quiet, final sleep;

'Think of the glorious waking-hour,
Which will not dawn on grief and tears,
But on a ransomed spirit's power,
Certain and free from mortal fears.

'Seek now thy couch, and lie till morn,
Then from thy chamber, calm, descend,
With mind nor tossed, nor anguish-torn,
But tranquil, fixed, to wait the end.

'And when thy opening eyes shall see
Mementos on the chamber wall,
Of one who has forgotten thee,
Shed not the tear of acrid gall.

'The tear which, welling from the heart,
Burns where its drop corrosive falls,
And makes each nerve in torture start,
At feelings it too well recalls:

'When the sweet hope of being loved
Threw Eden sunshine on life's way;
When every sense and feeling proved
Expectancy of brightest day:

'When the hand trembled to receive
A thrilling clasp, which seemed so near,
And the heart ventured to believe
Another heart esteemed it dear:

'When words, half love, all tenderness,
Were hourly heard, as hourly spoken,
When the long sunny days of bliss
Only by moonlight nights were broken:

Till, drop by drop, the cup of joy,
Filled full, with purple light was glowing,
And Faith, which watched it sparkling high,
Still never dreamt the overflowing.

'It fell not with a sudden crashing,
It poured not out like open sluice;
No, sparkling still, and redly flashing,
Drained, drop by drop, the generous juice.

'I saw it sink, and strove to taste it—
My eager lips approached the brim;
The movement only seemed to waste it—
It sank to dregs, all harsh and dim.

'These I have drunk, and they for ever
Have poisoned life and love for me;
A draught from Sodom's lake could never
More fiery, salt, and bitter be.

'Oh! Love was all a thin illusion;
Joy but the desert's flying stream;
And glancing back on long delusion,
My memory grasps a hollow dream.

'Yet whence that wondrous change of feeling,
I never knew, and cannot learn;
Nor why my lover's eye, congealing,
Grew cold and clouded, proud and stern.

'Nor wherefore, friendship's forms forgetting,
He careless left and cool withdrew,
Nor spoke of grief nor fond regretting,
Nor ev'n one glance of comfort threw.

'And neither word nor token sending,
Of kindness, since the parting day,
His course, for distant regions bending,
Went, self-contained and calm, away.

'O bitter, blighting, keen sensation,
  Which will not weaken, cannot die,
Hasten thy work of desolation,
  And let my tortured spirit fly!

'Vain as the passing gale, my crying;
  Though lightning-struck, I must live on;
I know at heart there is no dying
  Of love, and ruined hope, alone.

'Still strong and young, and warm with vigour,
  Though scathed, I long shall greenly grow;
And many a storm of wildest rigour
  Shall yet break o'er my shivered bough.

'Rebellious now to blank inertion,
  My unused strength demands a task;
Travel, and toil, and full exertion
  Are the last, only boon I ask.

'Whence, then, this vain and barren dreaming
  Of death, and dubious life to come?
I see a nearer beacon gleaming
  Over dejection's sea of gloom.

'The very wildness of my sorrow
  Tells me I yet have innate force;
My track of life has been too narrow,
  Effort shall trace a broader course.

'The world is not in yonder tower,
  Earth is not prisoned in that room,
Mid whose dark panels, hour by hour,
  I've sat, the slave and prey of gloom.

'One feeling—turned to utter anguish,
  Is not my being's only aim;
When, lorn and loveless, life will languish,
  But courage can revive the flame.

'He, when he left me, went a-roving
To sunny climes beyond the sea;
And I, the weight of woe removing,
Am free and fetterless as he.

'New scenes, new language, skies less clouded,
May once more wake the wish to live;
Strange foreign towns, astir and crowded,
New pictures to the mind may give.

'New forms and faces, passing ever,
May hide the one I still retain,
Defined and fixed, and fading never,
Stamped deep on vision, heart, and brain.

'And we might meet—time may have changed him,
Chance may reveal the mystery,
The secret influence which estranged him;
Love may restore him yet to me.

'False thought—false hope—in scorn be banished!
I am not loved—nor loved have been;
Recall not, then, the dreams scarce vanished;
Traitors! mislead me not again!

'To words like yours I bid defiance,
'Tis such my mental wreck have made;
Of God alone, and self-reliance,
I ask for solace—hope for aid.

'Morn comes—and ere meridian glory
O'er these, my natal woods, shall smile,
Both lonely wood and mansion hoary
I'll leave behind, full many a mile.'

GILBERT

I.—THE GARDEN

Above the city hung the moon,
  Right o'er a plot of ground
Where flowers and orchard-trees were fenced
  With lofty walls around:
'Twas Gilbert's garden—there to-night
  Awhile he walked alone;
And, tired with sedentary toil,
  Mused where the moonlight shone.

This garden, in a city heart,
  Lay still as houseless wild,
Though many-windowed mansion fronts
  Were round it closely piled;
But thick their walls, and those within
  Lived lives by noise unstirred;
Like wafting of an angel's wing,
  Time's flight by them was heard.

Some soft piano-notes alone
  Were sweet as faintly given,
Where ladies, doubtless, cheered the hearth
  With song that winter-even.
The city's many-mingled sounds
  Rose like the hum of ocean;
They rather lulled the heart than roused
  Its pulse to faster motion.

Gilbert has paced the single walk
  An hour, yet is not weary;
And, though it be a winter night,
  He feels nor cold nor dreary.

The prime of life is in his veins,
  And sends his blood fast flowing,
And Fancy's fervour warms the thoughts
  Now in his bosom glowing.

Those thoughts recur to early love,
  Or what he love would name,
Though haply Gilbert's secret deeds
  Might other title claim.
Such theme not oft his mind absorbs,
  He to the world clings fast,
And too much for the present lives,
  To linger o'er the past.

But now the evening's deep repose
  Has glided to his soul;
That moonlight falls on Memory,
  And shows her fading scroll.
One name appears in every line
  The gentle rays shine o'er,
And still he smiles and still repeats
  That one name—Elinor.

There is no sorrow in his smile,
  No kindness in his tone;
The triumph of a selfish heart
  Speaks coldly there alone.
He says: 'She loved me more than life;
  And truly it was sweet
To see so fair a woman kneel
  In bondage at my feet.

'There was a sort of quiet bliss
  To be so deeply loved,
To gaze on trembling eagerness
  And sit myself unmoved;

And when it pleased my pride to grant
At last some rare caress,
To feel the fever of that hand
My fingers deigned to press.

''Twas sweet to see her strive to hide
What every glance revealed;
Endowed, the while, with despot-might
Her destiny to wield.
I knew myself no perfect man,
Nor, as she deemed, divine;
I knew that I was glorious—but
By her reflected shine;

'Her youth, her native energy,
Her powers new-born and fresh—
'Twas these with Godhead sanctified
My sensual frame of flesh.
Yet, like a god did I descend
At last to meet her love;
And, like a god, I then withdrew
To my own heaven above.

'And never more could she invoke
My presence to her sphere;
No prayer, no plaint, no cry of hers
Could win my awful ear.
I knew her blinded constancy
Would ne'er my deeds betray,
And, calm in conscience, whole in heart,
I went my tranquil way.

'Yet, sometimes, I still feel a wish,
The fond and flattering pain
Of passion's anguish to create
In her young breast again.

Bright was the lustre of her eyes
  When they caught fire from mine;
If I had power—this very hour,
  Again I'd light their shine.

'But where she is, or how she lives,
  I have no clue to know;
I've heard she long my absence pined,
  And left her home in woe.
But busied, then, in gathering gold,
  As I am busied now,
I could not turn from such pursuit,
  To weep a broken vow.

'Nor could I give to fatal risk
  The fame I ever prized;
Even now, I fear, that precious fame
  Is too much compromised.'
An inward trouble dims his eye,
  Some riddle he would solve;
Some method to unloose a knot,
  His anxious thoughts revolve.

He, pensive, leans against a tree,
  A leafy evergreen—
The boughs, the moonlight, intercept,
  And hide him like a screen;
He starts—the tree shakes with his tremor,
  Yet nothing near him pass'd;
He hurries up the garden alley
  In strangely sudden haste.

With shaking hands he lifts the latchet,
  Steps o'er the threshold stone;
The heavy door slips from his fingers—
  It shuts, and he is gone.

What touched, transfixed, appalled his soul?—
  A nervous thought, no more;
'Twill sink like stone in placid pool,
  And calm close smoothly o'er.

II.—THE PARLOUR

Warm is the parlour atmosphere,
  Serene the lamp's soft light;
The vivid embers, red and clear,
  Proclaim a frosty night.
Books, varied, on the table lie,
  Three children o'er them bend,
And all, with curious, eager eye,
  The turning leaf attend.

Picture and tale alternately
  Their simple hearts delight,
And interest deep, and tempered glee,
  Illume their aspects bright.
The parents, from their fireside place,
  Behold that pleasant scene,
And joy is on the mother's face,
  Pride in the father's mien.

As Gilbert sees his blooming wife,
  Beholds his children fair,
No thought has he of transient strife,
  Or past though piercing fear.
The voice of happy infancy
  Lisps sweetly in his ear,
His wife, with pleased and peaceful eye,
  Sits, kindly smiling, near.

The fire glows on her silken dress,
  And shows its ample grace,
And warmly tints each hazel tress,
  Curled soft around her face.

The beauty that in youth he wooed
  Is beauty still, unfaded;
The brow of ever placid mood
  No churlish grief has shaded.

Prosperity, in Gilbert's home,
  Abides the guest of years;
There Want or Discord never come,
  And seldom Toil or Tears.
The carpets bear the peaceful print
  Of comfort's velvet tread,
And golden gleams, from plenty sent,
  In every nook are shed.

The very silken spaniel seems
  Of quiet ease to tell,
As near its mistress' feet it dreams,
  Sunk in a cushion's swell;
And smiles seem native to the eyes
  Of those sweet children three;
They have but looked on tranquil skies,
  And know not misery.

Alas! that Misery should come
  In such an hour as this;
Why could she not so calm a home
  A little longer miss?
But she is now within the door,
  Her steps advancing glide;
Her sullen shade has crossed the floor,
  She stands at Gilbert's side.

She lays her hand upon his heart,
  It bounds with agony;
His fireside chair shakes with the start
  That shook the garden tree.

His wife towards the children looks,
She does not mark his mien;
The children, bending o'er their books,
His terror have not seen.

In his own home, by his own hearth,
He sits in solitude,
And circled round with light and mirth,
Cold horror chills his blood.
His mind would hold with desperate clutch
The scene that round him lies;
No—changed, as by some wizard's touch,
The present prospect flies.

A tumult vague—a viewless strife
His futile struggles crush;
'Twixt him and his an unknown life
And unknown feelings rush.
He sees—but scarce can language paint
The tissue fancy weaves;
For words oft give but echo faint
Of thoughts the mind conceives.

Noise, tumult strange, and darkness dim
Efface both light and quiet;
No shape is in those shadows grim,
No voice in that wild riot.
Sustain'd and strong, a wondrous blast
Above and round him blows;
A greenish gloom, dense overcast,
Each moment denser grows.

He nothing knows—nor clearly sees,
Resistance checks his breath,
The high, impetuous, ceaseless breeze
Blows on him cold as death.

And still the undulating gloom
  Mocks sight with formless motion:
Was such sensation Jonah's doom,
  Gulphed in the depths of ocean?

Streaking the air, the nameless vision,
  Fast-driven, deep-sounding, flows;
Oh! whence its source, and what its mission?
  How will its terrors close?
Long-sweeping, rushing, vast and void,
  The universe it swallows;
And still the dark, devouring tide
  A typhoon tempest follows.

More slow it rolls; its furious race
  Sinks to its solemn gliding;
The stunning roar, the wind's wild chase,
  To stillness are subsiding;
And, slowly borne along, a form
  The shapeless chaos varies;
Poised in the eddy to the storm,
  Before the eye it tarries:

A woman drowned—sunk in the deep,
  On a long wave reclining;
The circling waters' crystal sweep,
  Like glass, her shape enshrining.
Her pale dead face, to Gilbert turned,
  Seems as in sleep reposing;
A feeble light, now first discerned,
  The features well disclosing.

No effort from the haunted air
  The ghastly scene could banish;
That hovering wave, arrested there,
  Rolled—throbbed—but did not vanish.

If Gilbert upward turned his gaze,
He saw the ocean-shadow;
If he looked down, the endless seas
Lay green as summer meadow.

And straight before, the pale corpse lay,
Upborne by air or billow,
So near, he could have touched the spray
That churned around its pillow.
The hollow anguish of the face
Had moved a fiend to sorrow;
Not death's fixed calm could rase the trace
Of suffering's deep-worn furrow.

All moved; a strong returning blast,
The mass of waters raising,
Bore wave and passive carcase past,
While Gilbert yet was gazing.
Deep in her isle-conceiving womb
It seemed the ocean thundered,
And soon, by realms of rushing gloom,
Were seer and phantom sundered.

Then swept some timbers from a wreck,
On following surges riding;
Then seaweed, in the turbid rack
Uptorn, went slowly gliding.
The horrid shade, by slow degrees,
A beam of light defeated,
And then the roar of raving seas,
Fast, far, and faint, retreated.

And all was gone—gone like a mist,
Corse, billows, tempest, wreck;
Three children close to Gilbert prest,
And clung around his neck.

'Good-night! good-night!' the prattlers said,
  And kissed their father's cheek;
'Twas now the hour their quiet bed
  And placid rest to seek.

The mother with her offspring goes
  To hear their evening prayer;
She nought of Gilbert's vision knows,
  And nought of his despair.
Yet, pitying God, abridge the time
  Of anguish, now his fate!
Though, haply, great has been his crime,
  Thy mercy, too, is great.

Gilbert, at length, uplifts his head,
  Bent for some moments low,
And there is neither grief nor dread
  Upon his subtle brow.
For well can he his feelings task,
  And well his looks command;
His features well his heart can mask,
  With smiles and smoothness bland.

Gilbert has reasoned with his mind—
  He says 'twas all a dream;
He strives his inward sight to blind
  Against truth's inward beam.
He pitied not that shadowy thing,
  When it was flesh and blood;
Nor now can pity's balmy spring
  Refresh his arid mood.

'And if that dream has spoken truth,'
  Thus musingly he says;
'If Elinor be dead, in sooth,
  Such chance the shock repays:

A net was woven round my feet,
  I scarce could further go;
Ere shame had forced a fast retreat,
  Dishonour brought me low.

'Conceal her, then, deep, silent sea,
  Give her a secret grave!
She sleeps in peace, and I am free,
  No longer terror's slave:
And homage still, from all the world,
  Shall greet my spotless name,
Since surges break and waves are curled
  Above its threatened shame.'

III.—THE WELCOME HOME

Above the city hangs the moon,
  Some clouds are boding rain;
Gilbert, erewhile on journey gone,
  To-night comes home again.
Ten years have passed above his head,
  Each year has brought him gain;
His prosperous life has smoothly sped,
  Without or tear or stain.

'Tis somewhat late—the city clocks
  Twelve deep vibrations toll,
As Gilbert at the portal knocks,
  Which is his journey's goal.
The street is still and desolate,
  The moon hid by a cloud;
Gilbert, impatient, will not wait,—
  His second knock peals loud.

The clocks are hushed—there's not a light
  In any window nigh,
And not a single planet bright
  Looks from the clouded sky;

The air is raw, the rain descends,
  A bitter north-wind blows;
His cloak the traveller scarce defends—
  Will not the door unclose?

He knocks the third time, and the last;
  His summons now they hear:
Within, a footstep, hurrying fast,
  Is heard approaching near.
The bolt is drawn, the clanking chain
  Falls to the floor of stone;
And Gilbert to his heart will strain
  His wife and children soon.

The hand that lifts the latchet, holds
  A candle to his sight,
And Gilbert, on the step, beholds
  A woman clad in white.
Lo! water from her dripping dress
  Runs on the streaming floor;
From every dark and clinging tress
  The drops incessant pour.

There's none but her to welcome him;
  She holds the candle high,
And, motionless in form and limb,
  Stands cold and silent nigh;
There's sand and seaweed on her robe,
  Her hollow eyes are blind;
No pulse in such a frame can throb,
  No life is there defined.

Gilbert turned ashy-white, but still
  His lips vouchsafed no cry;
He spurred his strength and master-will
  To pass the figure by,—

But, moving slow, it faced him straight,
It would not flinch nor quail:
Then first did Gilbert's strength abate,
His stony firmness fail.

He sank upon his knees and prayed;
The shape stood rigid there;
He called aloud for human aid,
No human aid was near.
An accent strange did thus repeat
Heaven's stern but just decree:
'The measure thou to her didst mete,
To thee shall measured be!'

Gilbert sprang from his bended knees,
By the pale spectre pushed,
And, wild as one whom demons seize,
Up the hall-staircase rushed;
Entered his chamber—near the bed
Sheathed steel and firearms hung—
Impelled by maniac purpose dread
He chose those stores among.

Across his throat a keen-edged knife
With vigorous hand he drew;
The wound was wide—his outraged life
Rushed rash and redly through.
And thus died, by a shameful death,
A wise and worldly man,
Who never drew but selfish breath
Since first his life began.

LIFE

Life, believe, is not a dream
  So dark as sages say;
Oft a little morning rain
  Foretells a pleasant day.
Sometimes there are clouds of gloom,
  But these are transient all;
If the shower will make the roses bloom,
  Oh, why lament its fall?
    Rapidly, merrily,
  Life's sunny hours flit by,
    Gratefully, cheerily,
  Enjoy them as they fly!

What though Death at times steps in,
  And calls our best away?
What though sorrow seems to win,
  O'er hope, a heavy sway?
Yet Hope again elastic springs,
  Unconquered, though she fell;
Still buoyant are her golden wings,
  Still strong to bear us well.
    Manfully, fearlessly,
  The day of trial bear,
    For gloriously, victoriously,
  Can courage quell despair!

THE LETTER

What is she writing? Watch her now,
  How fast her fingers move!
How eagerly her youthful brow
  Is bent in thought above!

Her long curls, drooping, shade the light,
She puts them quick aside,
Nor knows that band of crystals bright
Her hasty touch untied.
It slips adown her silken dress,
Falls glittering at her feet;
Unmarked it falls, for she no less
Pursues her labour sweet.

The very loveliest hour that shines
Is in that deep blue sky;
The golden sun of June declines,
It has not caught her eye.
The cheerful lawn, and unclosed gate,
The white road, far away,
In vain for her light footsteps wait,
She comes not forth to-day.
There is an open door of glass
Close by that lady's chair,
From thence, to slopes of mossy grass,
Descends a marble stair.

Tall plants of bright and spicy bloom
Around the threshold grow;
Their leaves and blossoms shade the room
From that sun's deepening glow.
Why does she not a moment glance
Between the clustering flowers,
And mark in heaven the radiant dance
Of evening's rosy hours?
Oh, look again! Still fixed her eye,
Unsmiling, earnest, still,
And fast her pen and fingers fly,
Urged by her eager will.

Her soul is in th' absorbing task;
To whom, then, doth she write?

Nay, watch her still more closely, ask
  Her own eyes' serious light;
Where do they turn, as now her pen
  Hangs o'er th' unfinished line?
Whence fell the tearful gleam that then
  Did in their dark spheres shine?
The summer-parlour looks so dark,
  When from that sky you turn,
And from th' expanse of that green park
  You scarce may aught discern.

Yet o'er the piles of porcelain rare,
  O'er flower-stand, couch, and vase,
Sloped, as if leaning on the air,
  One picture meets the gaze.
'Tis there she turns; you may not see,
  Distinct, what form defines
The clouded mass of mystery
  Yon broad gold frame confines.
But look again; inured to shade
  Your eyes now faintly trace
A stalwart form, a massive head,
  A firm, determined face.

Black Spanish locks, a sunburnt cheek,
  A brow high, broad, and white,
Where every furrow seems to speak
  Of mind and moral might.
Is that her god? I cannot tell;
  Her eye a moment met
Th' impending picture, then it fell
  Darkened and dimmed and wet.
A moment more, her task is done,
  And sealed the letter lies;
And now, towards the setting sun
  She turns her tearful eyes.

Those tears flow over, wonder not,
  For by the inscription see
In what a strange and distant spot
  Her heart of hearts must be!
Three seas and many a league of land
  That letter must pass o'er,
Ere read by him to whose loved hand
  'Tis sent from England's shore.
Remote colonial wilds detain
  Her husband, loved though stern;
She, mid that smiling English scene,
  Weeps for his wished return.

REGRET

Long ago I wished to leave
  'The house where I was born;'
Long ago I used to grieve,
  My home seemed so forlorn.
In other years, its silent rooms
  Were filled with haunting fears;
Now, their very memory comes
  O'ercharged with tender tears.

Life and marriage I have known,
  Things once deemed so bright;
Now, how utterly is flown
  Every ray of light!
Mid the unknown sea of life
  I no blest isle have found;
At last, through all its wild waves' strife,
  My bark is homeward bound.

Farewell, dark and rolling deep!
  Farewell, foreign shore!

Open, in unclouded sweep,
  Thou glorious realm before!
Yet, though I had safely pass'd
  That weary, vexed main,
One loved voice, through surge and blast,
  Could call me back again.

Though the soul's bright morning rose
  O'er Paradise for me,
William! even from Heaven's repose
  I'd turn, invoked by thee!
Storm nor surge should e'er arrest
  My soul, exulting then:
All my heaven was once thy breast,
  Would it were mine again!

PRESENTIMENT

'Sister, you've sat there all the day,
  Come to the hearth awhile;
The wind so wildly sweeps away,
  The clouds so darkly pile.
That open book has lain, unread,
  For hours upon your knee;
You've never smiled nor turned your head;
  What can you, sister, see?'

'Come hither, Jane, look down the field;
  How dense a mist creeps on!
The path, the hedge, are both concealed,
  Ev'n the white gate is gone;
No landscape through the fog I trace,
  No hill with pastures green;
All featureless is Nature's face,
  All masked in clouds her mien.

'Scarce is the rustle of a leaf
Heard in our garden now;
The year grows old, its days wax brief,
The tresses leave its brow.
The rain drives fast before the wind,
The sky is blank and grey;
O Jane, what sadness fills the mind
On such a dreary day!'

'You think too much, my sister dear;
You sit too long alone;
What though November days be drear?
Full soon will they be gone.
I've swept the hearth, and placed your chair,
Come, Emma, sit by me;
Our own fireside is never drear,
Though late and wintry wane the year,
Though rough the night may be.'

'The peaceful glow of our fireside
Imparts no peace to me:
My thoughts would rather wander wide
Than rest, dear Jane, with thee.
I'm on a distant journey bound,
And if, about my heart,
Too closely kindred ties were bound,
'Twould break when forced to part.

'"Soon will November days be o'er:"
Well have you spoken, Jane:
My own forebodings tell me more—
For me, I know by presage sure,
They'll ne'er return again:
Ere long, nor sun nor storm to me
Will bring or joy or gloom;
They reach not that Eternity
Which soon will be my home.'

Eight months are gone, the summer sun
  Sets in a glorious sky;
A quiet field, all green and lone,
  Receives its rosy dye.
Jane sits upon a shaded stile,
  Alone she sits there now;
Her head rests on her hand the while
  And thought o'ercasts her brow.

She's thinking of one winter's day,
  A few short months ago,
When Emma's bier was borne away
  O'er wastes of frozen snow.
She's thinking how that drifted snow
  Dissolved in spring's first gleam,
And how her sister's memory now
  Fades, even as fades a dream.

The snow will whiten earth again,
  But Emma comes no more;
She left, mid winter's sleet and rain,
  This world for Heaven's far shore.
On Beulah's hills she wanders now,
  On Eden's tranquil plain;
To her shall Jane hereafter go,
  She ne'er shall come to Jane!

THE TEACHER'S MONOLOGUE

The room is quiet, thoughts alone
  People its mute tranquillity;
The yoke put off, the long task done,—
  I am, as it is bliss to be,

Still and untroubled. Now, I see,
  For the first time, how soft the day
O'er waveless water, stirless tree,
  Silent and sunny, wings its way.
Now, as I watch that distant hill,
  So faint, so blue, so far removed,
Sweet dreams of home my heart may fill,
  That home where I am known and loved:
It lies beyond; yon azure brow
  Parts me from all Earth holds for me;
And, morn and eve, my yearnings flow
  Thitherward tending, changelessly.
My happiest hours, ay! all the time,
  I love to keep in memory,
Lapsed among moors, ere life's first prime
  Decayed to dark anxiety.

Sometimes, I think a narrow heart
  Makes me thus mourn those far away,
And keeps my love so far apart,
  From friends and friendships of to-day;
Sometimes, I think 'tis but a dream
  I treasure up so jealously,
All the sweet thoughts I live on seem
  To vanish into vacancy:
And then, this strange, coarse world around
  Seems all that's palpable and true;
And every sight and every sound
  Combine my spirit to subdue
To aching grief; so void and lone
  Is Life, and Earth—so worse than vain,
The hopes that, in my own heart sown,
  And cherished by such sun and rain
As Joy and transient Sorrow shed,
  Have ripened to a harvest there:
Alas! methinks I hear it said,
  'Thy golden sheaves are empty air.'

All fades away; my very home
  I think will soon be desolate;
I hear, at times, a warning come
  Of bitter partings at its gate;
And, if I should return and see
  The hearth-fire quenched, the vacant chair;
And hear it whispered mournfully,
  That farewells have been spoken there,
What shall I do, and whither turn?
Where look for peace? When cease to mourn?

'Tis not the air I wished to play,
  The strain I wished to sing;
My wilful spirit slipped away
  And struck another string.
I neither wanted smile nor tear,
  Bright joy nor bitter woe,
But just a song that sweet and clear,
  Though haply sad, might flow.

A quiet song, to solace me
  When sleep refused to come;
A strain to chase despondency
  When sorrowful for home.
In vain I try; I cannot sing;
  All feels so cold and dead;
No wild distress, no gushing spring
  Of tears in anguish shed;

But all the impatient gloom of one
  Who waits a distant day,
When, some great task of suffering done,
  Repose shall toil repay.
For youth departs, and pleasure flies,
  And life consumes away,
And youth's rejoicing ardour dies
  Beneath this drear delay;

And Patience, weary with her yoke,
  Is yielding to despair,
And Health's elastic spring is broke
  Beneath the strain of care.
Life will be gone ere I have lived;
  Where now is Life's first prime?
I've worked and studied, longed and grieved,
  Through all that rosy time.

To toil, to think, to long, to grieve,—
  Is such my future fate?
The morn was dreary, must the eve
  Be also desolate?
Well, such a life at least makes Death
  A welcome, wished-for friend;
Then, aid me, Reason, Patience, Faith,
  To suffer to the end!

◆

PASSION

Some have won a wild delight,
  By daring wilder sorrow;
Could I gain thy love to-night,
  I'd hazard death to-morrow.

Could the battle-struggle earn
  One kind glance from thine eye,
How this withering heart would burn,
  The heady fight to try!

Welcome nights of broken sleep,
  And days of carnage cold,
Could I deem that thou wouldst weep
  To hear my perils told.

Tell me, if with wandering bands
I roam full far away,
Wilt thou to those distant lands
In spirit ever stray?

Wild, long, a trumpet sounds afar;
Bid me—bid me go
Where Seik and Briton meet in war,
On Indian Sutlej's flow.

Blood has died the Sutlej's waves
With scarlet stain, I know;
Indus' borders yawn with graves,
Yet, command me go!

Though rank and high the holocaust
Of nations steams to heaven,
Glad I'd join the death-doomed host,
Were but the mandate given.

Passion's strength should nerve my arm,
Its ardour stir my life,
Till human force to that dread charm
Should yield and sink in wild alarm,
Like trees to tempest-strife.

If, hot from war, I seek thy love,
Darest thou turn aside?
Darest thou then my fire reprove,
By scorn, and maddening pride?

No—my will shall yet control
Thy will so high and free,
And love shall tame that haughty soul—
Yes—tenderest love for me.

I'll read my triumph in thine eyes,
  Behold, and prove the change;
Then leave, perchance, my noble prize,
  Once more in arms to range.

I'd die when all the foam is up,
  The bright wine sparkling high;
Nor wait till in the exhausted cup
  Life's dull dregs only lie.

Then Love thus crowned with sweet reward,
  Hope blest with fulness large,
I'd mount the saddle, draw the sword,
  And perish in the charge!

PREFERENCE

Not in scorn do I reprove thee,
  Not in pride thy vows I waive,
But, believe, I could not love thee,
  Wert thou prince, and I a slave.
These, then, are thine oaths of passion?
  This, thy tenderness for me?
Judged, even, by thine own confession,
  Thou art steeped in perfidy.
Having vanquished, thou wouldst leave me!
  Thus I read thee long ago;
Therefore, dared I not deceive thee,
  Even with friendship's gentle show.
Therefore, with impassive coldness
  Have I ever met thy gaze;
Though, full oft, with daring boldness,
  Thou thine eyes to mine didst raise.
Why that smile? Thou now art deeming
  This my coldness all untrue,—

But a mask of frozen seeming,
  Hiding secret fires from view.
Touch my hand, thou self-deceiver;
  Nay—be calm, for I am so:
Does it burn? Does my lip quiver?
  Has mine eye a troubled glow?
Canst thou call a moment's colour
  To my forehead—to my cheek?
Canst thou tinge their tranquil pallor
  With one flattering, feverish streak?
Am I marble? What! no woman
  Could so calm before thee stand?
Nothing living, sentient, human,
  Could so coldly take thy hand?
Yes—a sister might, a mother:
  My good-will is sisterly:
Dream not, then, I strive to smother
  Fires that inly burn for thee.
Rave not, rage not, wrath is fruitless,
  Fury cannot change my mind;
I but deem the feeling rootless
  Which so whirls in passion's wind.
Can I love? Oh, deeply—truly—
  Warmly—fondly—but not thee;
And my love is answered duly,
  With an equal energy.
Wouldst thou see thy rival? Hasten,
  Draw that curtain soft aside,
Look where yon thick branches chasten
  Noon, with shades of eventide.
In that glade, where foliage blending
  Forms a green arch overhead,
Sits thy rival, thoughtful bending
  O'er a stand with papers spread—
Motionless, his fingers plying
  That untired, unresting pen;
Time and tide unnoticed flying,
  There he sits—the first of men!

Man of conscience—man of reason;
  Stern, perchance, but ever just;
Foe to falsehood, wrong, and treason,
  Honour's shield, and virtue's trust!
Worker, thinker, firm defender
  Of Heaven's truth—man's liberty;
Soul of iron—proof to slander,
  Rock where founders tyranny.
Fame he seeks not—but full surely
  She will seek him, in his home;
This I know, and wait securely
  For the atoning hour to come.
To that man my faith is given,
  Therefore, soldier, cease to sue;
While God reigns in earth and heaven,
  I to him will still be true!

EVENING SOLACE

The human heart has hidden treasures,
  In secret kept, in silence sealed;—
The thoughts, the hopes, the dreams, the pleasures,
  Whose charms were broken if revealed.
And days may pass in gay confusion,
  And nights in rosy riot fly,
While, lost in Fame's or Wealth's illusion,
  The memory of the Past may die.

But there are hours of lonely musing,
  Such as in evening silence come,
When, soft as birds their pinions closing,
  The heart's best feelings gather home.

‘IN THAT GLADE, WHERE FOLIAGE BLENDING FORMS A GREEN ARCH OVERHEAD.’

Then in our souls there seems to languish
 A tender grief that is not woe;
And thoughts that once wrung groans of anguish,
 Now cause but some mild tears to flow.

And feelings, once as strong as passions,
 Float softly back—a faded dream;
Our own sharp griefs and wild sensations,
 The tale of others' sufferings seem.
Oh! when the heart is freshly bleeding,
 How longs it for that time to be,
When, through the mist of years receding,
 Its woes but live in reverie!

And it can dwell on moonlight glimmer,
 On evening shade and loneliness;
And, while the sky grows dim and dimmer,
 Feel no untold and strange distress—
Only a deeper impulse given
 By lonely hour and darkened room,
To solemn thoughts that soar to heaven
 Seeking a life and world to come.

◆

STANZAS

If thou be in a lonely place,
 If one hour's calm be thine,
As Evening bends her placid face
 O'er this sweet day's decline;
If all the earth and all the heaven
 Now look serene to thee,
As o'er them shuts the summer even,
 One moment—think of me!

Pause, in the lane, returning home;
'Tis dusk, it will be still:
Pause near the elm, a sacred gloom
Its breezeless boughs will fill.
Look at that soft and golden light,
High in the unclouded sky;
Watch the last bird's belated flight,
As it flits silent by.

Hark! for a sound upon the wind,
A step, a voice, a sigh;
If all be still, then yield thy mind,
Unchecked, to memory.
If thy love were like mine, how blest
That twilight hour would seem,
When, back from the regretted Past,
Returned our early dream!

If thy love were like mine, how wild
Thy longings, even to pain,
For sunset soft, and moonlight mild,
To bring that hour again?
But oft, when in thine arms I lay,
I've seen thy dark eyes shine,
And deeply felt their changeful ray
Spoke other love than mine.

My love is almost anguish now,
It beats so strong and true;
'Twere rapture, could I deem that thou
Such anguish ever knew.
I have been but thy transient flower,
Thou wert my god divine;
Till checked by death's congealing power,
This heart must throb for thine.

And well my dying hour were blest,
  If life's expiring breath
Should pass, as thy lips gently prest
  My forehead cold in death;
And sound my sleep would be, and sweet,
  Beneath the churchyard tree,
If sometimes in thy heart should beat
  One pulse, still true to me.

WATCHING AND WISHING[1]

Oh, would I were the golden light
  That shines around thee now,
As slumber shades the spotless white
  Of that unclouded brow!
It watches through each changeful dream
  Thy features' varied play;
It meets thy waking eyes' soft gleam
  By dawn—by op'ning day.

Oh, would I were the crimson veil
  Above thy couch of snow,
To dye that cheek so soft, so pale,
  With my reflected glow!
Oh, would I were the cord of gold
  Whose tassel set with pearls
Just meets the silken cov'ring's fold
  And rests upon thy curls,

Dishevell'd in thy rosy sleep,
  And shading soft thy dreams;
Across their bright and raven sweep
  The golden tassel gleams!

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[1] First published in the *Cornhill Magazine*, December, 1860.

I would be anything for thee,
  My love—my radiant love—
A flower, a bird, for sympathy,
  A watchful star above.

◆

WHEN THOU SLEEPEST

When thou sleepest, lulled in night,
  Art thou lost in vacancy?
Does no silent inward light,
  Softly breaking, fall on thee?
Does no dream on quiet wing
  Float a moment mid that ray,
Touch some answering mental string,
  Wake a note and pass away?

When thou watchest, as the hours
  Mute and blind are speeding on,
O'er that rayless path, where lowers
  Muffled midnight, black and lone;
Comes there nothing hovering near,
  Thought or half reality,
Whispering marvels in thine ear,
  Every word a mystery,

Chanting low an ancient lay,
  Every plaintive note a spell,
Clearing memory's clouds away,
  Showing scenes thy heart loves well?
Songs forgot, in childhood sung,
  Airs in youth beloved and known,
Whispered by that airy tongue,
  Once again are made thine own.

Be it dream in haunted sleep,
  Be it thought in vigil lone,
Drink'st thou not a rapture deep
  From the feeling, 'tis thine own?
All thine own; thou need'st not tell
  What bright form thy slumber blest;—
All thine own; remember well
  Night and shade were round thy rest.

Nothing looked upon thy bed,
  Save the lonely watch-light's gleam;
Not a whisper, not a tread
  Scared thy spirit's glorious dream.
Sometimes, when the midnight gale
  Breathed a moan and then was still,
Seemed the spell of thought to fail,
  Checked by one ecstatic thrill;

Felt as all external things,
  Robed in moonlight, smote thine eye;
Then thy spirit's waiting wings
  Quivered, trembled, spread to fly;
Then th' aspirer wildly swelling
  Looked, where mid transcendency
Star to star was mutely telling
  Heaven's resolve and fate's decree.

Oh! it longed for holier fire
  Than this spark in earthly shrine;
Oh! it soared, and higher, higher,
  Sought to reach a home divine.
Hopeless quest! soon weak and weary
  Flagged the pinion, drooped the plume,
And again in sadness dreary
  Came the baffled wanderer home,

And again it turned for soothing
To th' unfinished, broken dream;
While, the ruffled current smoothing,
Thought rolled on her startled stream.
I have felt this cherished feeling,
Sweet and known to none but me;
Still I felt it nightly healing
Each dark day's despondency.

◆

PARTING

THERE'S no use in weeping,
Though we are condemned to part:
There's such a thing as keeping
A remembrance in one's heart:

There's such a thing as dwelling
On the thought ourselves have nursed,
And with scorn and courage telling
The world to do its worst.

We'll not let its follies grieve us,
We'll just take them as they come;
And then every day will leave us
A merry laugh for home.

When we've left each friend and brother,
When we're parted wide and far,
We will think of one another,
As even better than we are.

Every glorious sight above us,
Every pleasant sight beneath,
We'll connect with those that love us,
Whom we truly love till death!

In the evening, when we're sitting
  By the fire, perchance alone,
Then shall heart with warm heart meeting,
  Give responsive tone for tone.

We can burst the bonds which chain us,
  Which cold human hands have wrought,
And where none shall dare restrain us
  We can meet again, in thought.

So there's no use in weeping,
  Bear a cheerful spirit still;
Never doubt that Fate is keeping
  Future good for present ill!

◆

APOSTASY

This last denial of my faith,
  Thou, solemn Priest, hast heard;
And, though upon my bed of death,
  I call not back a word.
Point not to thy Madonna, Priest,—
  Thy sightless saint of stone;
She cannot, from this burning breast,
  Wring one repentant moan.

Thou say'st that, when a sinless child,
  I duly bent the knee,
And prayed to what in marble smiled
  Cold, lifeless, mute, on me.
I did. But listen! Children spring
  Full soon to riper youth;
And, for Love's vow and Wedlock's ring,
  I sold my early truth.

'Twas not a grey, bare head, like thine,
Bent o'er me, when I said,
'That land and God and Faith are mine,
For which thy fathers bled.'
I see thee not, my eyes are dim;
But well I hear thee say,
'O daughter, cease to think of him
Who led thy soul astray.

'Between you lies both space and time;
Let leagues and years prevail
To turn thee from the path of crime,
Back to the Church's pale.'
And, did I need that thou shouldst tell
What mighty barriers rise
To part me from that dungeon-cell,
Where my loved Walter lies?

And, did I need that thou shouldst taunt
My dying hour at last,
By bidding this worn spirit pant
No more for what is past?
Priest—*must* I cease to think of him?
How hollow rings that word!
Can time, can tears, can distance dim
The memory of my lord?

I said before, I saw not thee,
Because, an hour agone,
Over my eyeballs, heavily,
The lids fell down like stone.
But still my spirit's inward sight
Beholds his image beam
As fixed, as clear, as burning bright,
As some red planet's gleam.

Talk not of thy Last Sacrament,
Tell not thy beads for me;
Both rite and prayer are vainly spent,
As dews upon the sea.
Speak not one word of Heaven above,
Rave not of Hell's alarms;
Give me but back my Walter's love,
Restore me to his arms!

Then will the bliss of Heaven be won;
Then will Hell shrink away,
As I have seen night's terrors shun
The conquering steps of day.
'Tis my religion thus to love,
My creed thus fixed to be;
Not death shall shake, nor Priestcraft break
My rock-like constancy!

Now go; for at the door there waits
Another stranger guest;
He calls—I come—my pulse scarce beats,
My heart fails in my breast.
Again that voice—how far away,
How dreary sounds that tone!
And I, methinks, am gone astray,
In trackless wastes and lone.

I fain would rest a little while:
Where can I find a stay,
Till dawn upon the hills shall smile,
And show some trodden way?
'I come! I come!' in haste she said;
''Twas Walter's voice I heard!'
Then up she sprang—but fell back, dead,
His name her latest word.

WINTER STORES

We take from life one little share,
And say that this shall be
A space, redeemed from toil and care,
From tears and sadness free.

And, haply, Death unstrings his bow,
And Sorrow stands apart,
And, for a little while, we know
The sunshine of the heart.

Existence seems a summer eve,
Warm, soft, and full of peace;
Our free, unfettered feelings give
The soul its full release.

A moment, then, it takes the power
To call up thoughts that throw,
Around that charmed and hallowed hour,
This life's divinest glow.

But Time, though viewlessly it flies,
And slowly, will not stay;
Alike, through clear and clouded skies,
It cleaves its silent way.

Alike the bitter cup of grief,
Alike the draught of bliss,
Its progress leaves but moment brief
For baffled lips to kiss.

The sparkling draught is dried away,
The hour of rest is gone,
And urgent voices, round us, say,
'Ho, lingerer, hasten on!'

And has the soul, then, only gained,
  From this brief time of ease,
A moment's rest, when overstrained,
  One hurried glimpse of peace?

No; while the sun shone kindly o'er us,
  And flowers bloomed round our feet,—
While many a bud of joy before us
  Unclosed its petals sweet,—

An unseen work within was plying;
  Like honey-seeking bee,
From flower to flower, unwearied, flying,
  Laboured one faculty,—

Thoughtful for Winter's future sorrow,
  Its gloom and scarcity;
Prescient to-day of want to-morrow,
  Toiled quiet Memory.

'Tis she that from each transient pleasure
  Extracts a lasting good;
'Tis she that finds, in summer, treasure
  To serve for winter's food.

And when Youth's summer day is vanished,
  And Age brings Winter's stress,
Her stores, with hoarded sweets replenished,
  Life's evening hours will bless.

THE MISSIONARY

Plough, vessel, plough the British main,
Seek the free ocean's wider plain;
Leave English scenes and English skies,
Unbind, dissever English ties;

Bear me to climes remote and strange,
Where altered life, fast-following change,
Hot action, never-ceasing toil,
Shall stir, turn, dig, the spirit's soil;
Fresh roots shall plant, fresh seed shall sow,
Till a new garden there shall grow,
Cleared of the weeds that fill it now,–
Mere human love, mere selfish yearning,
  Which, cherished, would arrest me yet.
I grasp the plough, there's no returning,
  Let me, then, struggle to forget.

But England's shores are yet in view,
And England's skies of tender blue
Are arched above her guardian sea.
I cannot yet Remembrance flee;
I must again, then, firmly face
That task of anguish to retrace.
Wedded to home—I home forsake;
Fearful of change—I changes make;
Too fond of ease—I plunge in toil;
Lover of calm—I seek turmoil:
Nature and hostile Destiny
  Stir in my heart a conflict wild;
And long and fierce the war will be
  Ere duty both has reconciled.

What other tie yet holds me fast
To the divorced, abandoned past?
Smouldering, on my heart's altar lies
The fire of some great sacrifice,
Not yet half quenched. The sacred steel
But lately struck my carnal will,
My life-long hope, first joy and last,
What I loved well, and clung to fast;
What I wished wildly to retain,
What I renounced with soul-felt pain;

What—when I saw it, axe-struck, perish—
Left me no joy on earth to cherish;
A man bereft—yet sternly now
I do confirm that Jephtha vow:
Shall I retract, or fear, or flee?
Did Christ, when rose the fatal tree
Before him, on Mount Calvary?
'Twas a long fight, hard fought, but won,
And what I did was justly done.

Yet, Helen! from thy love I turned,
When my heart most for thy heart burned;
I dared thy tears, I dared thy scorn—
Easier the death-pang had been borne.
Helen, thou might'st not go with me,
I could not—dared not stay for thee!
I heard, afar, in bonds complain
The savage from beyond the main;
And that wild sound rose o'er the cry
Wrung out by passion's agony;
And even when, with the bitterest tear
  I ever shed, mine eyes were dim,
Still, with the spirit's vision clear,
  I saw Hell's empire, vast and grim,
Spread on each Indian river's shore,
Each realm of Asia covering o'er.
There, the weak, trampled by the strong,
  Live but to suffer—hopeless die;
There pagan-priests, whose creed is Wrong,
  Extortion, Lust, and Cruelty,
Crush our lost race—and brimming fill
The bitter cup of human ill;
And I—who have the healing creed,
  The faith benign of Mary's Son,
Shall I behold my brother's need,
  And, selfishly, to aid him shun?
I—who upon my mother's knees,

In childhood, read Christ's written word,
Received his legacy of peace,
His holy rule of action heard;
I—in whose heart the sacred sense
Of Jesus' love was early felt;
Of his pure, full benevolence,
His pitying tenderness for guilt;
His shepherd-care for wandering sheep,
For all weak, sorrowing, trembling things,
His mercy vast, his passion deep
Of anguish for man's sufferings;
I—schooled from childhood in such lore—
Dared I draw back or hesitate,
When called to heal the sickness sore
Of those far off and desolate?
Dark, in the realm and shades of Death,
Nations, and tribes, and empires lie,
But even to them the light of Faith
Is breaking on their sombre sky:
And be it mine to bid them raise
Their drooped heads to the kindling scene,
And know and hail the sunrise blaze
Which heralds Christ the Nazarene.
I know how Hell the veil will spread
Over their brows and filmy eyes,
And earthward crush the lifted head
That would look up and seek the skies;
I know what war the fiend will wage
Against that soldier of the Cross,
Who comes to dare his demon rage,
And work his kingdom shame and loss.
Yes, hard and terrible the toil
Of him who steps on foreign soil,
Resolved to plant the gospel vine,
Where tyrants rule and slaves repine;
Eager to lift Religion's light
Where thickest shades of mental night

Screen the false god and fiendish rite;
Reckless that missionary blood,
Shed in wild wilderness and wood,
Has left, upon the unblest air,
The man's deep moan—the martyr's prayer.
I know my lot—I only ask
Power to fulfil the glorious task;
Willing the spirit, may the flesh
Strength for the day receive afresh.
May burning sun or deadly wind
Prevail not o'er an earnest mind;
May torments strange or direst death
Nor trample truth, nor baffle faith.
Though such blood-drops should fall from me
As fell in old Gethsemane,
Welcome the anguish, so it gave
More strength to work—more skill to save.
And, oh! if brief must be my time,
If hostile hand or fatal clime
Cut short my course—still o'er my grave,
Lord, may thy harvest whitening wave.
So I the culture may begin,
Let others thrust the sickle in;
If but the seed will faster grow,
May my blood water what I sow!

What! have I ever trembling stood,
And feared to give to God that blood?
What! has the coward love of life
Made me shrink from the righteous strife?
Have human passions, human fears
Severed me from those Pioneers
Whose task is to march first, and trace
Paths for the progress of our race?
It has been so; but grant me, Lord,
Now to stand steadfast by Thy word!

Protected by salvation's helm,
  Shielded by faith, with truth begirt,
To smile when trials seek to whelm
  And stand mid testing fires unhurt
Hurling Hell's strongest bulwarks down,
  Even when the last pang thrills my breast,
When death bestows the martyr's crown,
  And calls me into Jesus' rest.
Then for my ultimate reward—
Then for the world-rejoicing word—
The voice from Father—Spirit—Son:
'Servant of God, well hast thou done!'

* * *

MEMORY[1]

When the dead in their cold graves are lying
  Asleep, to wake never again,
When past are their smiles and their sighing,
  Oh! why should their memories remain?

Though sunshine and spring may have lightened
  The wild flowers that blow on their graves;
Though summer their tombstones have brightened,
  And autumn have pall'd them with leaves;

Though winter have wildly bewailed them
  With her dirge wind, as sad as a knell;
Though the shroud of her snow-wreath have veiled them,
  Still, how deep in our bosoms they dwell!

The shadow and sun-sparkle vanish,
  The cloud and the light fleet away;
But man from his heart may not banish
  Ev'n thoughts that are torment to stay.

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[1] First published in the *Cornhill Magazine*, February 1893.

The reflection departs from the river,
  When the tree that hung o'er is cut down;
But on Memory's calm current for ever
  The shade, without substance, is thrown.

When quenched in the glow of the ember,
  When the life-fire ceases to burn,
Oh! why should the spirit remember?
  Oh! why should the parted return?

Because that the fire is *still* shining,
  Because that the lamp is still bright;
While the body in dust is reclining,
  The soul lives in glory and light.

THE ORPHANS[1]

(Translated from the French)

'Twas New-Year's night; the joyous throng
  Of guests from banquet rose,
And lightly took their homeward path
  Across the drifted snows.
That night, e'en to the peasants' shed,
Some little gleam of gladness spread.

That night, beside a chapel door,
  Two lonely children stood;
In timid tone, with utterance faint,
  They asked a little food:
Careless, the laughing guests passed by,
Too gay to mark the Orphans' cry.

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[1] First published in the Manchester *Athenæum Album*, 1850.

A lamp that lit the sacred shrine
  The children's pale cheeks showed;
The elder stretched his trembling hand
  For what was not bestowed;
The younger sang a plaintive strain,
Oft dropped, then feebly raised again:

'Two friendless, helpless children, we,
  Our mother's death we weep;
Together in one narrow grave,
  She and our father sleep!
We too of cold and want must die,
If none will help or hear our cry!'

This voice was lost; the winter-wind
  Bore off its tones subdued,
And soon the merry feasters gone,
  Left all in solitude;
And none had looked towards the church
Or marked the Orphans in its porch.

Then turned they to the chapel door;
  Their mother oft had said
That God will shield the friendless poor,
  When other aid is fled.
They knocked—an echo mocked the ear;
They waited—Death alone drew near!

Time speeds; the lamp shines feebly still,
  The chimes of midnight sound;
Heard now from far, a chariot's wheels
  Ring o'er the frozen ground.
Rise, Orphans! Call! No!—hushed their cry.
Unchecked, the chariot thunders by.

A priest his matins came to say,
  When dawn first lit the skies;

He found them on the threshold laid;
  He called—they would not rise!
The icy steps of stone their bed,
The white snow for their covering spread.

Clasped closely in each other's arms
  As if for warmth, they lay;
But perished is the fire of Life,
  And stilled the pulses' play;
Mute, motionless, and ashen pale,
They slept, no more to wake or wail!

The elder pressed the younger's lips,
  As if to check a prayer;
As if to say, ''Tis vain to ask!
  Compassion dwells not here!'
And half he screened his brother's form
To hide him from the frozen storm.

Lulled thus in everlasting sleep,
  The Orphan Babes are laid;
Now those their piteous fate may weep
  Who would not give them aid;
Crowds thronged the church by morning light,
But none came near that winter-night!

POEMS BY ELLIS BELL

FAITH AND DESPONDENCY

'The winter wind is loud and wild,
Come close to me, my darling child;
Forsake thy books, and mateless play;
And, while the night is gathering gray,
We'll talk its pensive hours away——

'Iernë, round our sheltered hall
November's gusts unheeded call;
Not one faint breath can enter here
Enough to wave my daughter's hair,
And I am glad to watch the blaze
Glance from her eyes, with mimic rays;
To feel her cheek, so softly pressed,
In happy quiet on my breast.

'But, yet, even this tranquillity
Brings bitter, restless thoughts to me;
And, in the red fire's cheerful glow,
I think of deep glens, blocked with snow;
I dream of moor, and misty hill,
Where evening closes dark and chill;
For, lone, among the mountains cold,
Lie those that I have loved of old.
And my heart aches, in hopeless pain,
Exhausted with repinings vain,
That I shall greet them ne'er again!'

'Father, in early infancy,
When you were far beyond the sea,
Such thoughts were tyrants over me!
I often sat, for hours together,
Through the long nights of angry weather,
Raised on my pillow, to descry
The dim moon struggling in the sky;
Or, with strained ear, to catch the shock,
Of rock with wave, and wave with rock;
So would I fearful vigil keep,
And, all for listening, never sleep.
But this world's life has much to dread,
Not so, my Father, with the dead.

'Oh! not for them, should we despair,
The grave is drear, but they are not there;
Their dust is mingled with the sod,
Their happy souls are gone to God!
You told me this, and yet you sigh,
And murmur that your friends must die.
Ah! my dear father, tell me why?
For, if your former words were true,
  How useless would such sorrow be;
As wise, to mourn the seed which grew
  Unnoticed on its parent tree,
Because it fell in fertile earth,
And sprang up to a glorious birth—
Struck deep its root, and lifted high
Its green boughs in the breezy sky.

'But I'll not fear, I will not weep
For those whose bodies rest in sleep,—
I know there is a blessed shore,
  Opening its ports for me and mine;
And, gazing Time's wide waters o'er,
  I weary for that land divine,

Where we were born, where you and I
Shall meet our dearest, when we die;
From suffering and corruption free,
Restored into the Deity.'

'Well hast thou spoken, sweet, trustful child!
  And wiser than thy sire;
And worldly tempests, raging wild,
  Shall strengthen thy desire—
Thy fervent hope, through storm and foam,
  Through wind and ocean's roar,
To reach, at last, the eternal home,
  The steadfast, changeless shore!'

◆

STARS

Ah! why, because the dazzling sun
  Restored our Earth to joy,
Have you departed, every one,
  And left a desert sky?

All through the night, your glorious eyes
  Were gazing down in mine,
And, with a full heart's thankful sighs,
  I blessed that watch divine.

I was at peace, and drank your beams
  As they were life to me;
And revelled in my changeful dreams,
  Like petrel on the sea.

Thought followed thought, star followed star,
  Through boundless regions, on;
While one sweet influence, near and far,
  Thrilled through, and proved us one!

'STRUCK DEEP ITS ROOT, AND LIFTED HIGH ITS GREEN BOUGHS.'

Why did the morning dawn to break
  So great, so pure, a spell;
And scorch with fire the tranquil cheek,
  Where your cool radiance fell?

Blood-red, he rose, and, arrow-straight,
  His fierce beams struck my brow;
The soul of nature sprang, elate,
  But *mine* sank sad and low!

My lids closed down, yet through their veil
  I saw him, blazing, still,
And steep in gold the misty dale,
  And flash upon the hill.

I turned me to the pillow, then,
  To call back night, and see
Your worlds of solemn light, again,
  Throb with my heart, and me!

It would not do—the pillow glowed,
  And glowed both roof and floor;
And birds sang loudly in the wood,
  And fresh winds shook the door;

The curtains waved, the wakened flies
  Were murmuring round my room,
Imprisoned there, till I should rise,
  And give them leave to roam.

O stars, and dreams, and gentle night;
  O night and stars, return!
And hide me from the hostile light
  That does not warm but burn;

That drains the blood of suffering men;
  Drinks tears, instead of dew;
Let me sleep through his blinding reign,
  And only wake with you!

THE PHILOSOPHER

Enough of thought, philosopher!
  Too long hast thou been dreaming
Unlightened, in this chamber drear,
  While summer's sun is beaming!
Space-sweeping soul, what sad refrain
Concludes thy musings once again?

'Oh, for the time when I shall sleep
  Without identity,
And never care how rain may steep,
  Or snow may cover me!
No promised heaven, these wild desires
  Could all, or half fulfil;
No threatened hell, with quenchless fires,
  Subdue this quenchless will!'

'So said I, and still say the same;
  Still, to my death, will say—
Three gods, within this little frame,
  Are warring night and day;
Heaven could not hold them all, and yet
  They all are held in me;
And must be mine till I forget
  My present entity!
Oh, for the time, when in my breast
  Their struggles will be o'er!
Oh, for the day, when I shall rest,
  And never suffer more!'

'I saw a spirit, standing, man,
  Where thou dost stand—an hour ago,
And round his feet three rivers ran,
  Of equal depth, and equal flow—

A golden stream—and one like blood;
  And one like sapphire seemed to be;
But where they joined their triple flood,
  It tumbled in an inky sea.
The spirit sent his dazzling gaze
  Down through that ocean's gloomy night;
Then, kindling all, with sudden blaze,
  The glad deep sparkled wide and bright—
White as the sun, far, far more fair
Than its divided sources were!'

'And even for that spirit, seer,
  I've watched and sought my life-time long;
Sought him in heaven, hell, earth, and air,
  An endless search, and always wrong.
Had I but seen his glorious eye
  Once light the clouds that wilder me;
I ne'er had raised this coward cry
  To cease to think, and cease to be;
I ne'er had called oblivion blest,
  Nor stretching eager hands to death,
Implored to change for senseless rest
  This sentient soul, this living breath—
Oh, let me die—that power and will
  Their cruel strife may close;
And conquered good and conquering ill
  Be lost in one repose!'

REMEMBRANCE

Cold in the earth—and the deep snow piled above thee,
  Far, far removed, cold in the dreary grave!
Have I forgot, my only Love, to love thee,
  Severed at last by Time's all-severing wave?

Now, when alone, do my thoughts no longer hover
  Over the mountains, on that northern shore,
Resting their wings where heath and fern-leaves cover
  Thy noble heart for ever, ever more?

Cold in the earth—and fifteen wild Decembers,
  From those brown hills, have melted into spring:
Faithful, indeed, is the spirit that remembers
  After such years of change and suffering!

Sweet Love of youth, forgive, if I forget thee,
  While the world's tide is bearing me along;
Other desires and other hopes beset me,
  Hopes which obscure, but cannot do thee wrong!

No later light has lightened up my heaven,
  No second morn has ever shone for me;
All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given,
  All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee.

But when the days of golden dreams had perished,
  And even Despair was powerless to destroy;
Then did I learn how existence could be cherished,
  Strengthened and fed without the aid of joy.

Then did I check the tears of useless passion—
  Weaned my young soul from yearning after thine;
Sternly denied its burning wish to hasten
  Down to that tomb already more than mine.

And, even yet, I dare not let it languish,
  Dare not indulge in memory's rapturous pain;
Once drinking deep of that divinest anguish,
  How could I seek the empty world again?

THE OUTCAST MOTHER

I've seen this dell in July's shine,
As lovely as an angel's dream;
Above—Heaven's depth of blue divine,
Around—the evening's golden beam.

I've seen the purple heather-bell
Look out by many a storm-worn stone;
And, oh! I've known such music swell,—
Such wild notes wake these passes lone—

So soft, yet so intensely felt;
So low, yet so distinctly heard;
My breath would pause, my eyes would melt,
And tears would dew the green heath-sward.

I'd linger here a summer day,
Nor care how fast the hours flew by,
Nor mark the sun's departing ray
Smile sadly from the dark'ning sky.

Then, then, I might have laid me down,
And dreamed my sleep would gentle be;
I might have left thee, darling one,
And thought thy God was guarding thee!

But now there is no wand'ring glow,
No gleam to say that God is nigh;
And coldly spreads the couch of snow,
And harshly sounds thy lullaby.

Forests of heather, dark and long,
Wave their brown branching arms above;
And they must soothe thee with their song,
And they must shield my child of love.

Alas! the flakes are heavily falling,
They cover fast each guardian crest;
And chilly white their shroud is palling
Thy frozen limbs and freezing breast.

Wakes up the storm more madly wild,
The mountain drifts are tossed on high;
Farewell, unbless'd, unfriended child,
I cannot bear to watch thee die!

A DEATH-SCENE

'O DAY! he cannot die
When thou so fair art shining!
O Sun, in such a glorious sky
So tranquilly declining;

'He cannot leave thee now,
While fresh west winds are blowing,
And all around his youthful brow
Thy cheerful light is glowing!

'Edward, awake, awake—
The golden evening gleams
Warm and bright on Arden's lake—
Arouse thee from thy dreams!

'Beside thee, on my knee,
My dearest friend, I pray
That thou, to cross the eternal sea,
Wouldst yet one hour delay:

'I hear its billows roar—
I see them foaming high;
But no glimpse of a further shore
Has blest my straining eye.

'Believe not what they urge
Of Eden isles beyond;
Turn back, from that tempestuous surge,
To thy own native land.

'It is not death, but pain
That struggles in thy breast—
Nay, rally, Edward, rouse again;
I cannot let thee rest!'

One long look, that sore reproved me
For the woe I could not bear—
One mute look of suffering moved me
To repent my useless prayer:

And, with sudden check, the heaving
Of distraction passed away;
Not a sign of further grieving
Stirred my soul that awful day.

Paled, at length, the sweet sun setting;
Sunk to peace the twilight breeze:
Summer dews fell softly, wetting
Glen, and glade, and silent trees.

Then his eyes began to weary,
Weighed beneath a mortal sleep;
And their orbs grew strangely dreary,
Clouded, even as they would weep.

But they wept not, but they changed not,
Never moved, and never closed;
Troubled still, and still they ranged not—
Wandered not, nor yet reposed!

So I knew that he was dying—
Stooped, and raised his languid head;
Felt no breath, and heard no sighing,
So I knew that he was dead.

SONG

The linnet in the rocky dells,
  The moor-lark in the air,
The bee among the heather bells
  That hide my lady fair:

The wild deer browse above her breast;
  The wild birds raise their brood;
And they, her smiles of love caressed,
  Have left her solitude!

I ween, that when the grave's dark wall
  Did first her form retain,
They thought their hearts could ne'er recall
  The light of joy again.

They thought the tide of grief would flow
  Unchecked through future years;
But where is all their anguish now,
  And where are all their tears?

Well, let them fight for honour's breath,
  Or pleasure's shade pursue—
The dweller in the land of death
  Is changed and careless too.

And, if their eyes should watch and weep
  Till sorrow's source were dry,
She would not, in her tranquil sleep,
  Return a single sigh!

Blow, west wind, by the lonely mound,
  And murmur, summer-streams—
There is no need of other sound
  To soothe my lady's dreams.

ANTICIPATION

How beautiful the earth is still,
To thee—how full of happiness!
How little fraught with real ill,
Or unreal phantoms of distress!
How spring can bring thee glory, yet,
And summer win thee to forget
December's sullen time!
Why dost thou hold the treasure fast,
Of youth's delight, when youth is past,
And thou art near thy prime?

When those who were thy own compeers,
Equals in fortune and in years,
Have seen their morning melt in tears,
To clouded, smileless day;
Blest, had they died untried and young,
Before their hearts went wandering wrong,—
Poor slaves, subdued by passions strong,
A weak and helpless prey!

'Because I hoped while they enjoyed,
And by fulfilment, hope destroyed;
As children hope, with trustful breast,
I waited bliss—and cherished rest.
A thoughtful spirit taught me soon,
That we must long till life be done;
That every phase of earthly joy
Must always fade, and always cloy:

'This I foresaw—and would not chase
The fleeting treacheries;

But, with firm foot and tranquil face,
Held backward from that tempting race,
Gazed o'er the sands the waves efface,
To the enduring seas—
There cast my anchor of desire
Deep in unknown eternity;
Nor ever let my spirit tire,
With looking for *what is to be!*

'It is hope's spell that glorifies,
Like youth, to my maturer eyes,
All Nature's million mysteries,
The fearful and the fair—
Hope soothes me in the griefs I know;
She lulls my pain for others' woe,
And makes me strong to undergo
What I am born to bear.

'Glad comforter! will I not brave,
Unawed, the darkness of the grave?
Nay, smile to hear Death's billows rave—
Sustained, my guide, by thee?
The more unjust seems present fate,
The more my spirit swells elate,
Strong, in thy strength, to anticipate
Rewarding destiny!'

◆

THE PRISONER

A FRAGMENT

In the dungeon-crypts idly did I stray,
Reckless of the lives wasting there away;
'Draw the ponderous bars! open, Warder stern!'
He dared not say me nay—the hinges harshly turn.

'Our guests are darkly lodged,' I whisper'd, gazing through
The vault, whose grated eye showed heaven more gray than
blue;
(This was when glad Spring laughed in awaking pride;)
'Ay, darkly lodged enough!' returned my sullen guide.

Then, God forgive my youth; forgive my careless tongue;
I scoffed, as the chill chains on the damp flagstones rung:
'Confined in triple walls, art thou so much to fear,
That we must bind thee down and clench thy fetters here?'

The captive raised her face; it was as soft and mild
As sculptured marble saint, or slumbering unwean'd child;
It was so soft and mild, it was so sweet and fair,
Pain could not trace a line, nor grief a shadow there!

The captive raised her hand and pressed it to her brow;
'I have been struck,' she said, 'and I am suffering now;
Yet these are little worth your bolts and irons strong;
And, were they forged in steel, they could not hold me long.'

Hoarse laughed the jailor grim: 'Shall I be won to hear;
Dost think, fond, dreaming wretch, that *I* shall grant thy
prayer?
Or, better still, wilt melt my master's heart with groans?
Ah! sooner might the sun thaw down these granite stones.

'My master's voice is low, his aspect bland and kind,
But hard as hardest flint the soul that lurks behind;
And I am rough and rude, yet not more rough to see
Than is the hidden ghost that has its home in me.'

About her lips there played a smile of almost scorn,
'My friend,' she gently said, 'you have not heard me
mourn;
When you my kindred's lives, *my* lost life, can restore,
Then may I weep and sue,—but never, friend, before!

'Still, let my tyrants know, I am not doomed to wear
Year after year in gloom, and desolate despair;
A messenger of Hope comes every night to me,
And offers for short life, eternal liberty.

'He comes with western winds, with evening's wandering airs,
With that clear dusk of heaven that brings the thickest stars.
Winds take a pensive tone, and stars a tender fire,
And visions rise, and change, that kill me with desire.

'Desire for nothing known in my maturer years,
When Joy grew mad with awe, at counting future tears.
When, if my spirit's sky was full of flashes warm,
I knew not whence they came, from sun or thunderstorm.

'But, first, a hush of peace—a soundless calm descends;
The struggle of distress, and fierce impatience ends;
Mute music soothes my breast—unuttered harmony,
That I could never dream, till Earth was lost to me.

'Then dawns the Invisible; the Unseen its truth reveals;
My outward sense is gone, my inward essence feels:
Its wings are almost free—its home, its harbour found,
Measuring the gulph, it stoops and dares the final bound.

'Oh! dreadful is the check—intense the agony—
When the ear begins to hear, and the eye begins to see;
When the pulse begins to throb, the brain to think again;
The soul to feel the flesh, and the flesh to feel the chain.

'Yet I would lose no sting, would wish no torture less;
The more that anguish racks, the earlier it will bless;
And robed in fires of hell, or bright with heavenly shine,
If it but herald death, the vision is divine!'

She ceased to speak, and we, unanswering, turned to go—
We had no further power to work the captive woe:
Her cheek, her gleaming eye, declared that man had given
A sentence, unapproved, and overruled by Heaven.

◆

HOPE

Hope was but a timid friend;
  She sat without the grated den,
Watching how my fate would tend,
  Even as selfish-hearted men.

She was cruel in her fear;
  Through the bars one dreary day,
I looked out to see her there,
  And she turned her face away!

Like a false guard, false watch keeping,
  Still, in strife, she whispered peace;
She would sing while I was weeping;
  If I listened, she would cease.

False she was, and unrelenting;
  When my last joys strewed the ground,
Even Sorrow saw, repenting,
  Those sad relics scattered round;

Hope, whose whisper would have given
  Balm to all my frenzied pain,
Stretched her wings, and soared to heaven,
  Went, and ne'er returned again!

◆

A DAY DREAM

On a sunny brae alone I lay
  One summer afternoon;
It was the marriage-time of May,
  With her young lover, June.

From her mother's heart seemed loth to part
  That queen of bridal charms,
But her father smiled on the fairest child
  He ever held in his arms.

The trees did wave their plumy crests,
  The glad birds carolled clear;
And I, of all the wedding guests,
  Was only sullen there!

There was not one, but wished to shun
  My aspect void of cheer;
The very gray rocks, looking on,
  Asked, 'What do you here?'

And I could utter no reply;
  In sooth, I did not know
Why I had brought a clouded eye
  To greet the general glow.

So, resting on a heathy bank,
  I took my heart to me;
And we together sadly sank
  Into a reverie.

We thought, 'When winter comes again
  Where will these bright things be?
All vanished, like a vision vain,
  An unreal mockery!

'The birds that now so blithely sing,
  Through deserts, frozen dry,
Poor spectres of the perished spring,
  In famished troops will fly.

'And why should we be glad at all?
  The leaf is hardly green,
Before a token of its fall
  Is on the surface seen!'

Now, whether it were really so,
  I never could be sure;
But as in fit of peevish woe
  I stretched me on the moor,

A thousand thousand gleaming fires
  Seemed kindling in the air;
A thousand thousand silvery lyres
  Resounded far and near:

Methought the very breath I breathed
  Was full of sparks divine,
And all my heather-couch was wreathed
  By that celestial shine!

And, while the wide earth echoing rung
  To that strange minstrelsy,
The little glittering spirits sung,
  Or seemed to sing, to me:

'O mortal! mortal! let them die;
  Let time and tears destroy,
That we may overflow the sky
  With universal joy!

'Let grief distract the sufferer's breast,
And night obscure his way;
They hasten him to endless rest,
And everlasting day.

'To thee the world is like a tomb,
A desert's naked shore;
To us, in unimagined bloom,
It brightens more and more!

'And, could we lift the veil, and give
One brief glimpse to thine eye,
Thou wouldst rejoice for those that live,
Because they live to die.'

The music ceased; the noonday dream,
Like dream of night, withdrew;
But Fancy, still, will sometimes deem
Her fond creation true.

TO IMAGINATION

When weary with the long day's care,
And earthly change from pain to pain,
And lost, and ready to despair
Thy kind voice calls me back again:
O my true friend! I am not lone,
While thou canst speak with such a tone!

So hopeless is the world without,
The world within I doubly prize;
Thy world, where guile, and hate, and doubt,
And cold suspicion never rise;
Where thou, and I, and Liberty,
Have undisputed sovereignty.

What matters it, that all around
  Danger, and guilt, and darkness lie,
If but within our bosom's bound
  We hold a bright, untroubled sky,
Warm with ten thousand mingled rays
Of suns that know no winter days?

Reason, indeed, may oft complain
  For Nature's sad reality,
And tell the suffering heart how vain
  Its cherished dreams must always be;
And Truth may rudely trample down
The flowers of Fancy, newly-blown.

But thou art ever there, to bring
  The hovering vision back, and breathe
New glories o'er the blighted spring,
  And call a lovelier Life from Death,
And whisper, with a voice divine,
Of real worlds, as bright as thine.

I trust not to thy phantom bliss,
  Yet, still, in evening's quiet hour,
With never-failing thankfulness,
  I welcome thee, Benignant Power;
Sure solacer of human cares,
And sweeter hope, when hope despairs!

HOW CLEAR SHE SHINES

How clear she shines! How quietly
  I lie beneath her guardian light;
While heaven and earth are whispering me,
  'To-morrow wake, but dream to-night.'

Yes, Fancy, come, my Fairy love!
These throbbing temples softly kiss;
And bend my lonely couch above,
And bring me rest, and bring me bliss.

The world is going; dark world, adieu!
Grim world, conceal thee till the day;
The heart thou canst not all subdue
Must still resist, if thou delay!

Thy love I will not, will not share;
Thy hatred only wakes a smile;
Thy griefs may wound—thy wrongs may tear,
But, oh, thy lies shall ne'er beguile!

While gazing on the stars that glow
Above me, in that stormless sea,
I long to hope that all the woe
Creation knows, is held in thee!

And this shall be my dream to-night;
I'll think the heaven of glorious spheres
Is rolling on its course of light
In endless bliss, through endless years;
I'll think, there's not one world above,
Far as these straining eyes can see,
Where Wisdom ever laughed at Love,
Or Virtue crouched to Infamy;

Where, writhing 'neath the strokes of Fate,
The mangled wretch was forced to smile;
To match his patience 'gainst her hate,
His heart rebellious all the while:
Where Pleasure still will lead to wrong,
And helpless Reason warn in vain;
And Truth is weak, and Treachery strong;
And Joy the surest path to Pain;

And Peace, the lethargy of Grief;
  And Hope, a phantom of the soul;
And life, a labour, void and brief;
  And Death, the despot of the whole!

◆

SYMPATHY

There should be no despair for you
  While nightly stars are burning;
While evening pours its silent dew,
  And sunshine gilds the morning.
There should be no despair—though tears
  May flow down like a river:
Are not the best beloved of years
  Around your heart for ever?

They weep, you weep, it must be so;
  Winds sigh as you are sighing,
And Winter sheds its grief in snow
  Where Autumn's leaves are lying:
Yet these revive, and from their fate
  Your fate cannot be parted:
Then, journey on, if not elate,
  Still, *never* broken-hearted!

◆

PLEAD FOR ME

Oh, thy bright eyes must answer now,
When Reason, with a scornful brow,
Is mocking at my overthrow!
Oh, thy sweet tongue must plead for me
And tell why I have chosen thee!

Stern Reason is to judgment come,
Arrayed in all her forms of gloom:
Wilt thou, my advocate, be dumb?
No, radiant angel, speak and say,
Why I did cast the world away,—

Why I have persevered to shun
The common paths that others run,
And on a strange road journeyed on,
Heedless alike of wealth and power—
Of glory's wreath and pleasure's flower.

These once, indeed, seemed Beings Divine;
And they, perchance, heard vows of mine,
And saw my offerings on their shrine;
But careless gifts are seldom prized,
And *mine* were worthily despised.

So, with a ready heart, I swore
To seek their altar-stone no more;
And gave my spirit to adore
Thee, ever-present, phantom thing—
My slave, my comrade, and my king.

A slave, because I rule thee still,
Incline thee to my changeful will,
And make thy influence good or ill:
A comrade, for by day and night
Thou art my intimate delight,—

My darling pain that wounds and sears,
And wrings a blessing out from tears
By deadening me to earthly cares;
And yet, a king, though Prudence well
Have taught thy subject to rebel.

And am I wrong to worship where
Faith cannot doubt, nor hope despair,
Since my own soul can grant my prayer?
Speak, God of visions, plead for me,
And tell why I have chosen thee!

◆

SELF-INTERROGATION

'The evening passes fast away,
'Tis almost time to rest;
What thoughts has left the vanished day,
What feelings in thy breast?'

'The vanished day? It leaves a sense
Of labour hardly done;
Of little gained with vast expense—
A sense of grief alone!

'Time stands before the door of Death,
Upbraiding bitterly;
And Conscience, with exhaustless breath,
Pours black reproach on me:

'And though I've said that Conscience lies
And Time should Fate condemn;
Still, sad Repentance clouds my eyes,
And makes me yield to them!'

'Then art thou glad to seek repose?
Art glad to leave the sea,
And anchor all thy weary woes
In calm Eternity?

'Nothing regrets to see thee go—
Not one voice sobs "farewell";
And where thy heart has suffered so,
Canst thou desire to dwell?'

'Alas! the countless links are strong
  That bind us to our clay;
The loving spirit lingers long,
  And would not pass away!

'And rest is sweet, when laurelled fame
  Will crown the soldier's crest;
But a brave heart, with a tarnished name,
  Would rather fight than rest.'

'Well, thou hast fought for many a year,
  Hast fought thy whole life through,
Hast humbled Falsehood, trampled Fear;
  What is there left to do?'

''Tis true, this arm has hotly striven,
  Has dared what few would dare;
Much have I done, and freely given,
  But little learnt to bear!'

'Look on the grave where thou must sleep,
  Thy last and strongest foe;
It is endurance not to weep,
  If that repose seem woe—

'The long war closing in defeat—
  Defeat serenely borne,—
Thy midnight rest may still be sweet,
  And break in glorious morn!'

◆

DEATH

Death! that struck when I was most confiding
  In my certain faith of joy to be—
Strike again, Time's withered branch dividing
  From the fresh root of Eternity!

Leaves, upon Time's branch, were growing brightly,
  Full of sap, and full of silver dew;
Birds beneath its shelter gathered nightly;
  Daily round its flowers the wild bees flew.

Sorrow passed, and plucked the golden blossom;
  Guilt stripped off the foliage in its pride;
But, within its parent's kindly bosom,
  Flowed for ever Life's restoring tide.

Little mourned I for the parted gladness,
  For the vacant nest and silent song—
Hope was there, and laughed me out of sadness,
  Whispering, 'Winter will not linger long!'

And, behold! with tenfold increase blessing,
  Spring adorned the beauty-burdened spray;
Wind and rain and fervent heat, caressing,
  Lavished glory on that second May!

High it rose—no winged grief could sweep it;
  Sin was scared to distance with its shine;
Love, and its own life, had power to keep it
  From all wrong—from every blight but thine!

Cruel Death! The young leaves droop and languish;
  Evening's gentle air may still restore—
No! the morning sunshine mocks my anguish—
  Time, for me, must never blossom more!

Strike it down, that other boughs may flourish
  Where that perished sapling used to be;
Thus, at least, its mouldering corpse will nourish
  That from which it sprung—Eternity.

STANZAS TO ——

Well, some may hate, and some may scorn,
And some may quite forget thy name;
But my sad heart must ever mourn
Thy ruined hopes, thy blighted fame!
'Twas thus I thought, an hour ago,
Even weeping o'er that wretch's woe;
One word turned back my gushing tears,
And lit my altered eye with sneers.
Then 'Bless the friendly dust,' I said,
'That hides thy unlamented head!
Vain as thou wert, and weak as vain,
The slave of Falsehood, Pride, and Pain—
My heart has nought akin to thine;
Thy soul is powerless over mine.'
But these were thoughts that vanished too:
Unwise, unholy, and untrue:
Do I despise the timid deer,
Because his limbs are fleet with fear?
Or, would I mock the wolf's death-howl,
Because his form is gaunt and foul?
Or, hear with joy the leveret's cry,
Because it cannot bravely die?
No! Then above his memory
Let Pity's heart as tender be;
Say, 'Earth, lie lightly on that breast,
And, kind Heaven, grant that spirit rest!'

HONOUR'S MARTYR

The moon is full this winter night;
The stars are clear, though few;
And every window glistens bright
With leaves of frozen dew.

The sweet moon through your lattice gleams,
And lights your room like day;
And there you pass, in happy dreams,
The peaceful hours away!

While I, with effort hardly quelling
The anguish in my breast,
Wander about the silent dwelling,
And cannot think of rest.

The old clock in the gloomy hall
Ticks on, from hour to hour;
And every time its measured call
Seems lingering slow and slower:

And, oh, how slow that keen-eyed star
Has tracked the chilly gray!
What, watching yet! how very far
The morning lies away!

Without your chamber door I stand;
Love, are you slumbering still?
My cold heart, underneath my hand,
Has almost ceased to thrill.

Bleak, bleak the east wind sobs and sighs,
And drowns the turret bell,
Whose sad note, undistinguished, dies
Unheard, like my farewell!

To-morrow, Scorn will blight my name,
And Hate will trample me,
Will load me with a coward's shame—
A traitor's perjury.

False friends will launch their covert sneers;
True friends will wish me dead;
And I shall cause the bitterest tears
That you have ever shed.

The dark deeds of my outlawed race
Will then like virtues shine;
And men will pardon their disgrace,
Beside the guilt of mine.

For, who forgives the accursed crime
Of dastard treachery?
Rebellion, in its chosen time,
May Freedom's champion be;

Revenge may stain a righteous sword,
It may be just to slay;
But, traitor, traitor,—from *that* word
All true breasts shrink away!

Oh, I would give my heart to death,
To keep my honour fair;
Yet, I'll not give my inward faith
My honour's *name* to spare!

Not even to keep your priceless love,
Dare I, Beloved, deceive;
This treason should the future prove,
Then, only then, believe!

I know the path I ought to go;
I follow fearlessly,
Inquiring not what deeper woe
Stern duty stores for me.

So foes pursue, and cold allies
Mistrust me, every one:
Let me be false in others' eyes,
If faithful in my own.

◆

STANZAS

I'LL not weep that thou art going to leave me,
There's nothing lovely here;
And doubly will the dark world grieve me,
While thy heart suffers there.

I'll not weep, because the summer's glory
Must always end in gloom;
And, follow out the happiest story—
It closes with a tomb!

And I am weary of the anguish
Increasing winters bear;
Weary to watch the spirit languish
Through years of dead despair.

So, if a tear, when thou art dying,
Should haply fall from me,
It is but that my soul is sighing,
To go and rest with thee.

MY COMFORTER

WELL hast thou spoken, and yet not taught
A feeling strange or new;
Thou hast but roused a latent thought,
A cloud-closed beam of sunshine brought
To gleam in open view.

Deep down, concealed within my soul,
That light lies hid from men;
Yet glows unquenched—though shadows roll,
Its gentle ray cannot control—
About the sullen den.

Was I not vexed, in these gloomy ways
  To walk alone so long?
Around me, wretches uttering praise,
Or howling o'er their hopeless days,
  And each with frenzy's tongue;—

A brotherhood of misery,
  Their smiles as sad as sighs;
Whose madness daily maddened me,
Distorting into agony
  The bliss before my eyes!

So stood I, in Heaven's glorious sun,
  And in the glare of Hell;
My spirit drank a mingled tone,
Of seraph's song, and demon's moan;
What my soul bore, my soul alone
  Within itself may tell!

Like a soft air above a sea,
  Tossed by the tempest's stir;
A thaw-wind, melting quietly
The snow-drift on some wintry lea;
No: what sweet thing resembles thee,
  My thoughtful Comforter?

And yet a little longer speak,
  Calm this resentful mood;
And while the savage heart grows meek,
For other token do not seek,
But let the tear upon my cheek
  Evince my gratitude!

THE OLD STOIC

Riches I hold in light esteem,
And Love I laugh to scorn;
And lust of fame was but a dream,
That vanished with the morn:

And if I pray, the only prayer
That moves my lips for me
Is, 'Leave the heart that now I bear,
And give me liberty!'

Yes, as my swift days near their goal,
'Tis all that I implore;
In life and death a chainless soul,
With courage to endure.

POEMS BY ACTON BELL

A REMINISCENCE

Yes, thou art gone! and never more
  Thy sunny smile shall gladden me;
But I may pass the old church door,
  And pace the floor that covers thee,

May stand upon the cold, damp stone,
  And think that, frozen, lies below
The lightest heart that I have known,
  The kindest I shall ever know.

Yet, though I cannot see thee more,
  'Tis still a comfort to have seen;
And though thy transient life is o'er,
  'Tis sweet to think that thou hast been;

To think a soul so near divine,
  Within a form so angel fair,
United to a heart like thine,
  Has gladdened once our humble sphere.

◆

'BUT I MAY PASS THE OLD CHURCH DOOR.'

THE ARBOUR

I'll rest me in this sheltered bower,
  And look upon the clear blue sky
That smiles upon me through the trees,
  Which stand so thickly clustering by;

And view their green and glossy leaves,
  All glistening in the sunshine fair;
And list the rustling of their boughs,
  So softly whispering through the air.

And while my ear drinks in the sound,
  My winged soul shall fly away;
Reviewing long departed years
  As one mild, beaming, autumn day;

And soaring on to future scenes,
  Like hills and woods, and valleys green,
All basking in the summer's sun,
  But distant still, and dimly seen.

Oh, list! 'tis summer's very breath
  That gently shakes the rustling trees—
But look! the snow is on the ground—
  How can I think of scenes like these?

'Tis but the *frost* that clears the air,
  And gives the sky that lovely blue;
They're smiling in a *winter's* sun,
  Those evergreens of sombre hue.

And winter's chill is on my heart—
  How can I dream of future bliss?
How can my spirit soar away,
  Confined by such a chain as this

HOME

How brightly glistening in the sun
The woodland ivy plays!
While yonder beeches from their barks
Reflect his silver rays.

That sun surveys a lovely scene
From softly smiling skies;
And wildly through unnumbered trees
The wind of winter sighs:

Now loud, it thunders o'er my head,
And now in distance dies.
But give me back my barren hills,
Where colder breezes rise;

Where scarce the scattered, stunted trees
Can yield an answering swell,
But where a wilderness of heath
Returns the sound as well.

For yonder garden, fair and wide,
With groves of evergreen,
Long winding walks, and borders trim,
And velvet lawns between—

Restore to me that little spot,
With gray walls compassed round,
Where knotted grass neglected lies,
And weeds usurp the ground.

Though all around this mansion high
Invites the foot to roam,
And though its halls are fair within—
Oh, give me back my HOME!

VANITAS VANITATUM, OMNIA VANITAS

In all we do, and hear, and see,
Is restless Toil and Vanity.
While yet the rolling earth abides,
Men come and go like ocean tides;

And ere one generation dies,
Another in its place shall rise;
That, sinking soon into the grave,
Others succeed, like wave on wave;

And as they rise, they pass away.
The sun arises every day,
And hastening onward to the West,
He nightly sinks, but not to rest:

Returning to the eastern skies,
Again to light us, he must rise.
And still the restless wind comes forth,
Now blowing keenly from the North;

Now from the South, the East, the West,
For ever changing, ne'er at rest.
The fountains, gushing from the hills,
Supply the ever-running rills;

The thirsty rivers drink their store,
And bear it rolling to the shore,
But still the ocean craves for more.
'Tis endless labour everywhere!
Sound cannot satisfy the ear,

Light cannot fill the craving eye,
Nor riches half our wants supply,
Pleasure but doubles future pain,
And joy brings sorrow in her train;

Laughter is mad, and reckless mirth—
What does she in this weary earth?
Should Wealth, or Fame, our Life employ,
Death comes, our labour to destroy;

To snatch the untasted cup away,
For which we toiled so many a day.
What, then, remains for wretched man?
To use life's comforts while he can.

Enjoy the blessings Heaven bestows,
Assist his friends, forgive his foes;
Trust God, and keep His statutes still,
Upright and firm, through good and ill;

Thankful for all that God has given,
Fixing his firmest hopes on Heaven;
Knowing that earthly joys decay,
But hoping through the darkest day.

◆

THE PENITENT

I MOURN with thee, and yet rejoice
  That thou shouldst sorrow so;
With angel choirs I join my voice
  To bless the sinner's woe.

Though friends and kindred turn away,
  And laugh thy grief to scorn;
I hear the great Redeemer say,
  'Blessed are ye that mourn.'

Hold on thy course, nor deem it strange
  That earthly cords are riven:
Man may lament the wondrous change,
  But 'there is joy in heaven!'

MUSIC ON CHRISTMAS MORNING

Music I love—but never strain
Could kindle raptures so divine,
So grief assuage, so conquer pain,
And rouse this pensive heart of mine—
As that we hear on Christmas morn
Upon the wintry breezes borne.

Though Darkness still her empire keep,
And hours must pass, ere morning break;
From troubled dreams, or slumbers deep,
That music *kindly* bids us wake:
It calls us, with an angel's voice,
To wake, and worship, and rejoice;

To greet with joy the glorious morn,
Which angels welcomed long ago,
When our redeeming Lord was born,
To bring the light of Heaven below;
The Powers of Darkness to dispel,
And rescue Earth from Death and Hell.

While listening to that sacred strain,
My raptured spirit soars on high;
I seem to hear those songs again
Resounding through the open sky,
That kindled such divine delight,
In those who watched their flocks by night.

With them I celebrate his birth—
Glory to God in highest Heaven,
Good-will to men, and peace on earth,
To us a Saviour-king is given;
Our God is come to claim His own,
And Satan's power is overthrown!

A sinless God, for sinful men,
  Descends to suffer and to bleed;
Hell *must* renounce its empire then;
  The price is paid, the world is freed,
And Satan's self must now confess
That Christ has earned a *Right* to bless:

Now holy Peace may smile from Heaven,
  And heavenly Truth from earth shall spring;
The captive's galling bonds are riven,
  For our Redeemer is our King;
And He that gave His blood for men
Will lead us home to God again.

* * *

STANZAS

Oh, weep not, love! each tear that springs
  In those dear eyes of thine,
To me a keener suffering brings
  Than if they flowed from mine.

And do not droop! however drear
  The fate awaiting thee;
For *my* sake combat pain and care,
  And cherish life for me!

I do not fear thy love will fail;
  Thy faith is true, I know;
But, oh, my love! thy strength is frail
  For such a life of woe.

Were 't not for this, I well could trace
  (Though banished long from thee)
Life's rugged path, and boldly face
  The storms that threaten me.

Fear not for me—I've steeled my mind
Sorrow and strife to greet;
Joy with my love I leave behind,
Care with my friends I meet.

A mother's sad reproachful eye,
A father's scowling brow—
But he may frown and she may sigh:
I will not break my vow!

I love my mother, I revere
My sire, but fear not me—
Believe that Death alone can tear
This faithful heart from thee.

IF THIS BE ALL

O God! if this indeed be all
That Life can show to me;
If on my aching brow may fall
No freshening dew from Thee;

If with no brighter light than this
The lamp of hope may glow,
And I may only *dream* of bliss,
And wake to weary woe;

If friendship's solace must decay,
When other joys are gone,
And love must keep so far away,
While I go wandering on,—

Wandering and toiling without gain,
The slave of others' will,
With constant care and frequent pain,
Despised, forgotten still;

Grieving to look on vice and sin,
Yet powerless to quell
The silent current from within,
The outward torrent's swell ;

While all the good I would impart,
The feelings I would share,
Are driven backward to my heart,
And turned to wormwood there ;

If clouds must *ever* keep from sight
The glories of the Sun,
And I must suffer Winter's blight,
Ere Summer is begun :

If Life must be so full of care—
Then call me soon to thee ;
Or give me strength enough to bear
My load of misery.

◆

MEMORY

Brightly the sun of summer shone
Green fields and waving woods upon,
And soft winds wandered by ;
Above a sky of purest blue,
Around, bright flowers of loveliest hue,
Allured the gazer's eye.

But what were all these charms to me,
When one sweet breath of memory
Came gently wafting by ?
I closed my eyes against the day,
And called my willing soul away,
From earth, and air, and sky ;

That I might simply fancy there
One little flower—a primrose fair,
  Just opening into sight;
As in the days of infancy,
An opening primrose seemed to me
  A source of strange delight.

Sweet Memory! ever smile on me;
Nature's chief beauties spring from thee;
  Oh, still thy tribute bring!
Still make the golden crocus shine
Among the flowers the most divine,
  The glory of the spring.

Still in the wallflower's fragrance dwell;
And hover round the slight blue-bell,
  My childhood's darling flower.
Smile on the little daisy still,
The buttercup's bright goblet fill
  With all thy former power.

For ever hang thy dreamy spell
Round mountain star and heather bell,
  And do not pass away
From sparkling frost, or wreathed snow,
And whisper when the wild winds blow,
  Or rippling waters play.

Is childhood, then, so all divine?
Or, Memory, is the glory thine,
  That haloes thus the past?
Not *all* divine; its pangs of grief
(Although, perchance, their stay be brief)
  Are bitter while they last.

Nor is the glory all thine own,
For on our earliest joys alone
  That holy light is cast.

With such a ray, no spell of thine
Can make our later pleasures shine,
  Though long ago they passed.

TO COWPER

SWEET are thy strains, Celestial Bard;
  And oft, in childhood's years,
I've read them o'er and o'er again,
  With floods of silent tears.

The language of my inmost heart
  I traced in every line;
My sins, *my* sorrows, hopes, and fears,
  Were there—and only mine.

All for myself the sigh would swell,
  The tear of anguish start;
I little knew what wilder woe
  Had filled the Poet's heart.

I did not know the nights of gloom,
  The days of misery:
The long, long years of dark despair,
  That crushed and tortured thee.

But they are gone; from earth at length
  Thy gentle soul is pass'd,
And in the bosom of its God
  Has found its home at last.

It must be so, if God is love,
  And answers fervent prayer;
Then surely thou shalt dwell on high,
  And I may meet thee there.

Is He the source of every good,
The spring of purity?
Then in thine hours of deepest woe,
Thy God was still with thee.

How else, when every hope was fled,
Couldst thou so fondly cling
To holy things and holy men?
And how so sweetly sing

Of things that God alone could teach?
And whence that purity,
That hatred of all sinful ways—
That gentle charity?

Are *these* the symptoms of a heart
Of heavenly grace bereft—
For ever banished from its God,
To Satan's fury left?

Yet, should thy darkest fears be true,
If Heaven be so severe,
That such a soul as thine is lost,—
Oh! how shall *I* appear?

THE DOUBTER'S PRAYER

Eternal Power, of earth and air!
Unseen, yet seen in all around,
Remote, but dwelling everywhere,
Though silent, heard in every sound;

If e'er thine ear in mercy bent,
When wretched mortals cried to Thee,
And if, indeed, Thy Son was sent,
To save lost sinners such as me:

Then hear me now, while kneeling here,
I lift to thee my heart and eye,
And all my soul ascends in prayer,
Oh, give me—give me Faith! I cry.

Without some glimmering in my heart,
I could not raise this fervent prayer;
But, oh! a stronger light impart,
And in Thy mercy fix it there.

While Faith is with me, I am blest;
It turns my darkest night to day;
But while I clasp it to my breast,
I often feel it slide away.

Then, cold and dark, my spirit sinks,
To see my light of life depart;
And every fiend of Hell, methinks,
Enjoys the anguish of my heart.

What shall I do, if all my love,
My hopes, my toil, are cast away,
And if there be no God above,
To hear and bless me when I pray?

If this be vain delusion all,
If death be an eternal sleep,
And none can hear my secret call,
Or see the silent tears I weep!

Oh, help me, God! For thou alone
Canst my distracted soul relieve;
Forsake it not: it is thine own,
Though weak, yet longing to believe.

Oh, drive these cruel doubts away;
And make me know, that Thou art God!
A faith, that shines by night and day,
Will lighten every earthly load.

If I believe that Jesus died,
And waking, rose to reign above;
Then surely Sorrow, Sin, and Pride
Must yield to Peace, and Hope, and Love

And all the blessed words He said
Will strength and holy joy impart:
A shield of safety o'er my head,
A spring of comfort in my heart.

◆

A WORD TO THE 'ELECT'

You may rejoice to think *yourselves* secure;
You may be grateful for the gift divine—
That grace unsought, which made your black hearts pure,
And fits your earth-born souls in Heaven to shine.

But is it sweet to look around, and view
Thousands excluded from that happiness
Which they deserved, at least, as much as you—
Their faults not greater, nor their virtues less?

And wherefore should you love your God the more,
Because to you alone His smiles are given;
Because He chose to pass the *many* o'er,
And only bring the favoured *few* to Heaven?

And wherefore should your hearts more grateful prove,
Because for ALL the Saviour did not die?
Is yours the God of justice and of love?
And are your bosoms warm with charity?

Say, does your heart expand to all mankind?
And, would you ever to your neighbour do—
The weak, the strong, the enlightened, and the blind—
As you would have your neighbour do to you?

And when you, looking on your fellow-men,
Behold them doomed to endless misery,
How can you talk of joy and rapture then?—
May God withhold such cruel joy from me!

That none deserve eternal bliss I know;
Unmerited the grace in mercy given:
But none shall sink to everlasting woe,
That have not well deserved the wrath of Heaven.

And, oh! there lives within my heart
  A hope, long nursed by me;
(And should its cheering ray depart,
  How dark my soul would be!)

That as in Adam all have died,
  In Christ shall all men live;
And ever round His throne abide,
  Eternal praise to give.

That even the wicked shall at last
  Be fitted for the skies;
And when their dreadful doom is past,
  To life and light arise.

I ask not, how remote the day,
  Nor what the sinners' woe,
Before their dross is purged away;
  Enough for me to know—

That when the cup of wrath is drained,
  The metal purified,
They'll cling to what they once disdained,
  And live by Him that died.

◆

PAST DAYS

'Tis strange to think there *was* a time
  When mirth was not an empty name,
When laughter really cheered the heart,
  And frequent smiles unbidden came,
And tears of grief would only flow
In sympathy for others' woe;

When speech expressed the inward thought,
  And heart to kindred heart was bare,
And summer days were far too short
  For all the pleasures crowded there;
And silence, solitude, and rest,
Now welcome to the weary breast—

Were all unprized, uncourted then—
  And all the joy one spirit showed,
The other deeply felt again;
  And friendship like a river flowed,
Constant and strong its silent course,
For nought withstood its gentle force:

When night, the holy time of peace,
  Was dreaded as the parting hour;
When speech and mirth at once must cease,
  And silence must resume her power;
Though ever free from pains and woes,
She only brought us calm repose.

And when the blessed dawn again
  Brought daylight to the blushing skies,
We woke, and not *reluctant* then,
  To joyless *labour* did we rise;
But full of hope, and glad and gay,
We welcomed the returning day.

THE CONSOLATION

[This poem, like most of its predecessors, was first printed in the volume of poems published in 1846. It was afterwards included by Charlotte Brontë in her Selection from the Poems of Acton Bell, under the title of 'Lines Written from Home,' with this note:—]

My sister Anne had to taste the cup of life as it is mixed for the class termed 'Governesses.'

The following are some of the thoughts that now and then solace a governess:—

Though bleak these woods, and damp the ground
With fallen leaves so thickly strown,
And cold the wind that wanders round
With wild and melancholy moan;

There *is* a friendly roof, I know,
Might shield me from the wintry blast;
There is a fire, whose ruddy glow
Will cheer me for my wanderings past.

And so, though still, where'er I go,
Cold stranger-glances meet my eye;
Though, when my spirit sinks in woe,
Unheeded swells the unbidden sigh;

Though solitude, endured too long,
Bids youthful joys too soon decay,
Makes mirth a stranger to my tongue,
And overclouds my noon of day;

When kindly thoughts that would have way,
Flow back discouraged to my breast;
I know there *is*, though far away,
A home where heart and soul may rest.

Warm hands are there, that, clasped in mine,
  The warmer heart will not belie;
While mirth, and truth, and friendship shine
  In smiling lip and earnest eye.

The ice that gathers round my heart
  May there be thawed; and sweetly, then,
The joys of youth, that now depart,
  Will come to cheer my soul again.

Though far I roam, that thought shall be
  My hope, my comfort, everywhere;
While such a home remains to me,
  My heart shall never know despair!

LINES COMPOSED IN A WOOD ON A WINDY DAY

My soul is awakened, my spirit is soaring
  And carried aloft on the wings of the breeze;
For above and around me the wild wind is roaring,
  Arousing to rapture the earth and the seas.

The long withered grass in the sunshine is glancing,
  The bare trees are tossing their branches on high;
The dead leaves beneath them are merrily dancing,
  The white clouds are scudding across the blue sky.

I wish I could see how the ocean is lashing
  The foam of its billows to whirlwinds of spray;
I wish I could see how its proud waves are dashing,
  And hear the wild roar of their thunder to-day!

VIEWS OF LIFE

When sinks my heart in hopeless gloom,
And life can show no joy for me ;
And I behold a yawning tomb,
Where bowers and palaces should be ;

In vain you talk of morbid dreams ;
In vain you gaily smiling say,
That what to me so dreary seems,
The healthy mind deems bright and gay.

I too have smiled, and thought like you,
But madly smiled, and falsely deemed :
Truth led me to the present view,—
I'm waking now—'twas *then* I dreamed.

I lately saw a sunset sky,
And stood enraptured to behold
Its varied hues of glorious dye :
First, fleecy clouds of shining gold ;

These blushing took a rosy hue ;
Beneath them shone a flood of green ;
Nor less divine, the glorious blue
That smiled above them and between.

I cannot name each lovely shade ;
I cannot say how bright they shone ;
But one by one, I saw them fade ;
And what remained when they were gone?

Dull clouds remained, of sombre hue,
And when their borrowed charm was o'er,
The azure sky had faded too,
That smiled so softly bright before.

So, gilded by the glow of youth,
  Our varied life looks fair and gay;
And so remains the naked truth,
  When that false light is past away.

Why blame ye, then, my keener sight,
  That clearly sees a world of woes
Through all the haze of golden light
  That flattering Falsehood round it throws?

When the young mother smiles above
  The first-born darling of her heart,
Her bosom glows with earnest love,
  While tears of silent transport start.

Fond dreamer! little does she know
  The anxious toil, the suffering,
The blasted hopes, the burning woe,
  The object of her joy will bring.

Her blinded eyes behold not now
  What, soon or late, must be his doom;
The anguish that will cloud his brow,
  The bed of death, the dreary tomb.

As little know the youthful pair,
  In mutual love supremely blest,
What weariness, and cold despair,
  Ere long, will seize the aching breast.

And even should Love and Faith remain,
  (The greatest blessings life can show,)
Amid adversity and pain,
  To shine throughout with cheering glow;

They do not see how cruel Death
  Comes on, their loving hearts to part:
One feels not now the gasping breath,
  The rending of the earth-bound heart,—

The soul's and body's agony,
  Ere she may sink to her repose.
The sad survivor cannot see
  The grave above his darling close;

Nor how, despairing and alone,
  He then must wear his life away;
And linger, feebly toiling on,
  And fainting, sink into decay.

* * * *

Oh, Youth may listen patiently,
  While sad Experience tells her tale,
But doubt sits smiling in his eye,
  For ardent Hope will still prevail.

He hears how feeble Pleasure dies,
  By guilt destroyed, and pain and woe;
He turns to Hope—and she replies,
  'Believe it not—it is not so!'

'Oh, heed her not!' Experience says;
  'For thus she whispered once to me;
She told me, in my youthful days,
  How glorious manhood's prime would be.

'When, in the time of early Spring,
  Too chill the winds that o'er me pass'd,
She said, each coming day would bring
  A fairer heaven, a gentler blast.

'And when the sun too seldom beamed,
  The sky, o'ercast, too darkly frowned,
The soaking rain too constant streamed,
  And mists too dreary gathered round;

'She told me, Summer's glorious ray
Would chase those vapours all away,
  And scatter glories round;

With sweetest music fill the trees,
Load with rich scent the gentle breeze,
And strew with flowers the ground.

'But when, beneath that scorching ray,
I languished, weary through the day,
While birds refused to sing,
Verdure decayed from field and tree,
And panting Nature mourned with me
The freshness of the Spring,—

'"Wait but a little while," she said,
"Till Summer's burning days are fled;
And Autumn shall restore,
With golden riches of her own,
And Summer's glories mellowed down,
The freshness you deplore."

'And long I waited, but in vain:
That freshness never came again,
Though Summer passed away,
Though Autumn's mists hung cold and chill,
And drooping nature languished still,
And sank into decay.

'Till wintry blasts foreboding blew
Through leafless trees—and then I knew
That Hope was all a dream.
But thus, fond youth, she cheated me;
And she will prove as false to thee,
Though sweet her words may seem.'

Stern prophet! Cease thy bodings dire—
Thou canst not quench the ardent fire
That warms the breast of youth.
Oh, let it cheer him while it may,
And gently, gently die away—
Chilled by the damps of truth!

Tell him, that earth is not our rest;
Its joys are empty—frail at best;
  And point beyond the sky.
But gleams of light may reach us here;
And hope the *roughest* path can cheer;
  Then do not bid it fly!

Though hope may promise joys, that still
Unkindly time will ne'er fulfil;
  Or, if they come at all,
We never find them unalloyed,—
Hurtful perchance, or soon destroyed,
  They vanish or they pall;

Yet hope *itself* a brightness throws
O'er all our labours and our woes;
  While dark foreboding Care
A thousand ills will oft portend,
That Providence may ne'er intend
  The trembling heart to bear.

Or if they come, it oft appears,
Our woes are lighter than our fears,
  And far more bravely borne.
Then let us not enhance our doom;
But e'en in midnight's blackest gloom
  Expect the rising morn.

Because the road is rough and long,
Shall we despise the skylark's song,
  That cheers the wanderer's way?
Or trample down, with reckless feet,
The smiling flowerets, bright and sweet,
  Because they soon decay?

Pass pleasant scenes unnoticed by,
  Because the next is bleak and drear;
Or not enjoy a smiling sky,
  Because a tempest may be near?

No! while we journey on our way,
We'll smile on every lovely thing;
And ever, as they pass away,
To memory and hope we'll cling.

And though that awful river flows
Before us, when the journey's past,
Perchance of all the pilgrim's woes
Most dreadful—shrink not—'tis the last!

Though icy cold, and dark, and deep;
Beyond it smiles that blessed shore,
Where none shall suffer, none shall weep,
And bliss shall reign for evermore!

APPEAL

Oh, I am very weary,
Though tears no longer flow;
My eyes are tired of weeping,
My heart is sick of woe;

My life is very lonely,
My days pass heavily,
I'm weary of repining;
Wilt thou not come to me?

Oh, didst thou know my longings
For thee, from day to day,
My hopes, so often blighted,
Thou wouldst not thus delay!

THE STUDENT'S SERENADE

I HAVE slept upon my couch,
But my spirit did not rest,
For the labours of the day
Yet my weary soul opprest;

And before my dreaming eyes
Still the learned volumes lay,
And I could not close their leaves,
And I could not turn away

But I oped my eyes at last,
And I heard a muffled sound;
'Twas the night-breeze, come to say
That the snow was on the ground.

Then I knew that there was rest
On the mountain's bosom free;
So I left my fevered couch,
And I flew to waken thee!

I have flown to waken thee—
For, if thou wilt not arise,
Then my soul can drink no peace
From these holy moonlight skies.

And this waste of virgin snow
To my sight will not be fair,
Unless thou wilt smiling come,
Love, to wander with me there.

Then, awake! Maria, wake!
For, if thou couldst only know
How the quiet moonlight sleeps
On this wilderness of snow,

And the groves of ancient trees,
  In their snowy garb arrayed,
Till they stretch into the gloom
  Of the distant valley's shade;

I know thou wouldst rejoice
  To inhale this bracing air;
Thou wouldst break thy sweetest sleep
  To behold a scene so fair.

O'er these wintry wilds, *alone*,
  Thou wouldst joy to wander free;
And it will not please thee less,
  Though that bliss be shared with me.

THE CAPTIVE DOVE

Poor restless dove, I pity thee;
  And when I hear thy plaintive moan,
I mourn for thy captivity,
  And in thy woes forget mine own.

To see thee stand prepared to fly,
  And flap those useless wings of thine,
And gaze into the distant sky,
  Would melt a harder heart than mine.

In vain—in vain! Thou canst not rise:
  Thy prison roof confines thee there;
Its slender wires delude thine eyes,
  And quench thy longings with despair.

Oh, thou wert made to wander free
  In sunny mead and shady grove,
And far beyond the rolling sea,
  In distant climes, at will to rove!

Yet, hadst thou but one gentle mate
  Thy little drooping heart to cheer,
And share with thee thy captive state,
  Thou couldst be happy even there.

Yes, even there, if, listening by,
  One faithful dear companion stood,
While gazing on her full bright eye,
  Thou might'st forget thy native wood.

But thou, poor solitary dove,
  Must make, unheard, thy joyless moan;
The heart that Nature formed to love
  Must pine, neglected, and alone.

* * *

SELF-CONGRATULATION

'Ellen, you were thoughtless once
  Of beauty or of grace,
Simple and homely in attire,
  Careless of form and face.
Then whence this change? and wherefore now
  So often smooth your hair?
And wherefore deck your youthful form
  With such unwearied care?

'Tell us, and cease to tire our ears
  With that familiar strain;
Why will you play those simple tunes
  So often o'er again?'
'Indeed, dear friends, I can but say
  That childhood's thoughts are gone;
Each year its own new feelings brings,
  And years move swiftly on:

'And for these little simple airs—
  I love to play them o'er
So much—I dare not promise, now,
  To play them never more.'
I answered—and it was enough;
  They turned them to depart;
They could not read my secret thoughts,
  Nor see my throbbing heart.

I've noticed many a youthful form,
  Upon whose changeful face
The inmost workings of the soul
  The gazer well might trace;
The speaking eye, the changing lip,
  The ready blushing cheek,
The smiling, or beclouded brow,
  Their different feelings speak.

But, thank God! you might gaze on mine
  For hours, and never know
The secret changes of my soul
  From joy to keenest woe.
Last night, as we sat round the fire,
  Conversing merrily,
We heard, without, approaching steps
  Of one well known to me!

There was no trembling in my voice,
  No blush upon my cheek,
No lustrous sparkle in my eyes,
  Of hope, or joy, to speak;
But, oh! my spirit burned within,
  My heart beat full and fast!
He came not nigh—he went away—
  And then my joy was past.

And yet my comrades marked it not:
My voice was still the same;
They saw me smile, and o'er my face
No signs of sadness came.
They little knew my hidden thoughts;
And they will *never* know
The aching anguish of my heart,
The bitter burning woe!

FLUCTUATIONS

What though the Sun had left my sky;
To save me from despair
The blessed moon arose on high,
And shone serenely there.

I watched her, with a tearful gaze,
Rise slowly o'er the hill,
While through the dim horizon's haze
Her light gleamed faint and chill.

I thought such wan and lifeless beams
Could ne'er my heart repay
For the bright sun's most transient gleams
That cheered me through the day:

But, as above that mist's control
She rose, and brighter shone,
I felt her light upon my soul;
But now—that light is gone!

Thick vapours snatched her from my sight,
And I was darkling left,
All in the cold and gloomy night,
Of light and hope bereft;

Until, methought, a little star
  Shone forth with trembling ray,
To cheer me with its light afar—
  But that, too, passed away.

Anon, an earthly meteor blazed
  The gloomy darkness through;
I smiled, yet trembled while I gazed—
  But that soon vanished too!

And darker, drearier fell the night
  Upon my spirit then;—
But what is that faint struggling light?
  Is it the Moon again?

Kind Heaven! increase that silvery gleam,
  And bid these clouds depart,
And let her soft celestial beam
  Restore my fainting heart!

SELECTIONS

FROM THE LITERARY REMAINS

OF

ELLIS AND ACTON BELL

BY

CURRER BELL

SELECTIONS[1]

FROM

POEMS BY ELLIS BELL

It would not have been difficult to compile a volume out of the papers left by my sisters, had I, in making the selection, dismissed from my consideration the scruples and the wishes of those whose written thoughts these papers held. But this was impossible: an influence, stronger than could be exercised by any motive of expediency, necessarily regulated the selection. I have, then, culled from the mass only a little poem here and there. The whole makes but a tiny nosegay, and the colour and perfume of the flowers are not such as fit them for festal uses.

It has been already said that my sisters wrote much in childhood and girlhood. Usually, it seems a sort of injustice to expose in print the crude thoughts of the unripe mind, the rude efforts of the unpractised hand; yet I venture to give three little poems of my sister Emily's, written in her sixteenth year, because they illustrate a point in her character.

At that period she was sent to school. Her previous life, with the exception of a single half-year, had been passed in the absolute retirement of a village parsonage, amongst the hills bordering Yorkshire and Lancashire. The scenery of these hills is not grand—it is not romantic; it is scarcely striking. Long low moors, dark with heath, shut in little valleys, where a stream waters, here and there, a fringe of stunted copse. Mills and scattered cottages chase romance from these valleys; it is only higher up, deep in amongst the ridges of the moors, that Imagination can find rest for the sole of her foot: and even if she finds it there, she must be a solitude-loving raven—no gentle dove. If she demand beauty to inspire her, she must bring it inborn: these moors are too stern to yield any product so delicate. The eye of the gazer must *itself* brim with a 'purple light,' intense enough to perpetuate the brief flower-flush of August on the heather, or the rare sunset-smile of June; out of his heart must well the freshness, that in latter spring and early summer brightens the bracken, nurtures the moss, and cherishes the starry flowers that spangle for a few weeks the pasture of the moor-sheep. Unless that light and freshness are innate and self-sustained, the drear prospect of a Yorkshire moor will be found as barren of poetic as of agricultural interest: where the love of wild nature is strong, the locality will perhaps be clung to with the more passionate constancy, because from the hill-lover's self comes half its charm.

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[1] First published in the 1850 edition of '"Wuthering Heights" and "Agnes Grey."'

My sister Emily loved the moors. Flowers brighter than the rose bloomed in the blackest of the heath for her; out of a sullen hollow in a livid hill-side her mind could make an Eden. She found in the bleak solitude many and dear delights; and not the least and best loved was—liberty.

Liberty was the breath of Emily's nostrils; without it, she perished. The change from her own home to a school, and from her own very noiseless, very secluded, but unrestricted and inartificial mode of life, to one of disciplined routine (though under the kindliest auspices) was what she failed in enduring. Her nature proved here too strong for her fortitude. Every morning when she woke, the vision of home and the moors rushed on her, and darkened and saddened the day that lay before her. Nobody knew what

VIEW OF THE MOORS.

ailed her but me—I knew only too well. In this struggle her health was quickly broken: her white face, attenuated form, and failing strength threatened rapid decline. I felt in my heart she would die, if she did not go home, and with this conviction obtained her recall. She had only been three months at school; and it was some years before the experiment of sending her from home was again ventured on. After the age of twenty, having meantime studied alone with diligence and perseverance, she went with me to an establishment on the Continent: the same suffering and conflict ensued, heightened by the strong recoil of her upright, heretic and English spirit from the gentle Jesuitry of the foreign and Romish system. Once more she seemed sinking, but this time she rallied through the mere force of resolution: with inward remorse and shame she looked back on her former failure, and resolved to conquer in this second ordeal. She did conquer: but the victory cost her dear. She was never happy till she carried her hard-won knowledge back to the remote English village, the old parsonage-house, and desolate Yorkshire hills. A very few years more, and she looked her last on those hills, and breathed her last in that house, and under the aisle of that obscure village church found her last lowly resting-place. Merciful was the decree that spared her when she was a stranger in a strange land, and guarded her dying bed with kindred love and congenial constancy.

The following pieces were composed at twilight, in the schoolroom, when the leisure of the evening play-hour brought back in full tide the thoughts of home.

I

A LITTLE while, a little while,
The weary task is put away,
And I can sing and I can smile,
Alike, while I have holiday.

Where wilt thou go, my harassed heart—
What thought, what scene invites thee now?
What spot, or near or far apart,
Has rest for thee, my weary brow?

There is a spot, mid barren hills,
Where winter howls, and driving rain;
But, if the dreary tempest chills,
There is a light that warms again.

The house is old, the trees are bare,
Moonless above bends twilight's dome;
But what on earth is half so dear—
So longed for—as the hearth of home.

The mute bird sitting on the stone,
The dank moss dripping from the wall,
The thorn-trees gaunt, the walks o'ergown,
I love them—how I love them all!

Still, as I mused, the naked room,
The alien firelight died away;
And from the midst of cheerless gloom,
I passed to bright, unclouded day.

A little and a lone green lane,
That opened on a common wide;
A distant, dreamy, dim blue chain
Of mountains circling every side:

A heaven so clear, an earth so calm,
  So sweet, so soft, so hushed an air;
And, deepening still the dream-like charm,
  Wild moor-sheep feeding everywhere:

That was the scene, I knew it well;
  I knew the turfy pathway's sweep,
That, winding o'er each billowy swell,
  Marked out the tracks of wandering sheep.

Could I have lingered but an hour,
  It well had paid a week of toil;
But Truth has banished Fancy's power:
  Restraint and heavy task recoil.

Even as I stood with raptured eye,
  Absorbed in bliss so deep and dear,
My hour of rest had fleeted by,
  And back came labour, bondage, care.

◆

II

THE BLUEBELL

The Bluebell is the sweetest flower
  That waves in summer air:
Its blossoms have the mightiest power
  To soothe my spirit's care.

There is a spell in purple heath
  Too wildly, sadly dear;
The violet has a fragrant breath,
  But fragrance will not cheer.

The trees are bare, the sun is cold,
  And seldom, seldom seen;
The heavens have lost their zone of gold,
  And earth her robe of green.

And ice upon the glancing stream
  Has cast its sombre shade;
And distant hills and valleys seem
  In frozen mist arrayed.

The Bluebell cannot charm me now,
  The heath has lost its bloom;
The violets in the glen below,
  They yield no sweet perfume.

But, though I mourn the sweet Bluebell,
  'Tis better far away;
I know how fast my tears would swell
  To see it smile to-day.

For, oh! when chill the sunbeams fall
  Adown that dreary sky,
And gild yon dank and darkened wall
  With transient brilliancy;

How do I weep, how do I pine
  For the time of flowers to come,
And turn me from that fading shine,
  To mourn the fields of home!

* * *

III

Loud without the wind was roaring
  Through th' autumnal sky;
Drenching wet, the cold rain pouring,
  Spoke of winter nigh.
    All too like that dreary eve,
    Did my exiled spirit grieve.
Grieved at first, but grieved not long—
  Sweet—how softly sweet!—it came,
Wild words of an ancient song,
  Undefined, without a name.

'It was spring, and the skylark was singing:'
Those words they awakened a spell;
They unlocked a deep fountain, whose springing,
Nor absence, nor distance can quell.

In the gloom of a cloudy November
They uttered the music of May;
They kindled the perishing ember
Into fervour that could not decay.

Awaken, o'er all my dear moorland,
West wind, in thy glory and pride!
Oh! call me from valley and lowland,
To walk by the hill-torrent's side!

It is swelled with the first snowy weather;
The rocks they are icy and hoar,
And sullenly waves the long heather,
And the fern-leaves are sunny no more.

There are no yellow stars on the mountain;
The bluebells have long died away
From the brink of the moss-bedded fountain—
From the side of the wintry brae.

But lovelier than corn-fields all waving
In emerald, and vermeil, and gold,
Are the heights where the north wind is raving,
And the crags where I wandered of old.

It was morning: the bright sun was beaming;
How sweetly it brought back to me
The time when nor labour nor dreaming
Broke the sleep of the happy and free!

But blithely we rose as the dawn-heaven
Was melting to amber and blue,
And swift were the wings to our feet given,
As we traversed the meadows of dew.

For the moors! For the moors, where the short grass
Like velvet beneath us should lie!
For the moors! For the moors, where each high pass
Rose sunny against the clear sky!

For the moors, where the linnet was trilling
Its song on the old granite stone;
Where the lark, the wild sky-lark, was filling
Every breast with delight like its own!

What language can utter the feeling
Which rose, when in exile afar,
On the brow of a lonely hill kneeling,
I saw the brown heath growing there?

It was scattered and stunted, and told me
That soon even that would be gone:
It whispered, 'The grim walls enfold me,
I have bloomed in my last summer's sun.'

But not the loved music, whose waking
Makes the soul of the Swiss die away,
Has a spell more adored and heart-breaking
Than, for me, in that blighted heath lay.

The spirit which bent 'neath its power,
How it longed—how it burned to be free!
If I could have wept in that hour,
Those tears had been heaven to me.

Well—well; the sad minutes are moving,
Though loaded with trouble and pain;
And some time the loved and the loving
Shall meet on the mountains again!

◆

The following little piece has no title; but in it the Genius of a solitary region seems to address his wandering and wayward votary, and to recall within his influence the proud mind which rebelled at times even against what it most loved.

Shall earth no more inspire thee,
  Thou lonely dreamer now?
Since passion may not fire thee,
  Shall nature cease to bow?

Thy mind is ever moving,
  In regions dark to thee;
Recall its useless roving,
  Come back, and dwell with me.

I know my mountain breezes
  Enchant and soothe thee still;
I know my sunshine pleases,
  Despite thy wayward will.

When day with evening blending,
  Sinks from the summer sky,
I've seen thy spirit bending
  In fond idolatry.

I've watched thee every hour;
  I know thy mighty sway:
I know my magic power
  To drive thy griefs away.

Few hearts to mortals given,
  On earth so wildly pine;
Yet few would ask a heaven
  More like this earth than thine.

Then let my winds caress thee;
  Thy comrade let me be:
Since nought beside can bless thee,
  Return—and dwell with me.

Here again is the same mind in converse with a like abstraction. 'The Night-Wind,' breathing through an open window, has visited an ear which discerned language in its whispers.

THE NIGHT-WIND

In summer's mellow midnight,
  A cloudless moon shone through
Our open parlour window,
  And rose-trees wet with dew.

I sat in silent musing;
  The soft wind waved my hair;
It told me heaven was glorious,
  And sleeping earth was fair.

I needed not its breathing
  To bring such thoughts to me;
But still it whispered lowly,
  How dark the woods will be!

'The thick leaves in my murmur
  Are rustling like a dream,
And all their myriad voices
  Instinct with spirit seem.'

I said, 'Go, gentle singer,
  Thy wooing voice is kind:
But do not think its music
  Has power to reach my mind.

'Play with the scented flower,
  The young tree's supple bough,
And leave my human feelings
  In their own course to flow.'

The wanderer would not heed me;
  Its kiss grew warmer still.
'Oh, come!' it sighed so sweetly;
  'I'll win thee 'gainst thy will.

'Were we not friends from childhood?
Have I not loved thee long?
As long as thou, the solemn night,
Whose silence wakes my song.

'And when thy heart is resting
Beneath the church-aisle stone,
I shall have time for mourning,
And *thou* for being alone.'

◆

In these stanzas a louder gale has roused the sleeper on her pillow: the wakened soul struggles to blend with the storm by which it is swayed:—

'AY—there it is! it wakes to-night
Deep feelings I thought dead;
Strong in the blast—quick gathering light—
The heart's flame kindles red.

'Now I can tell by thine altered cheek,
And by thine eyes' full gaze,
And by the words thou scarce dost speak,
How wildly fancy plays.

'Yes—I could swear that glorious wind
Has swept the world aside,
Has dashed its memory from thy mind
Like foam-bells from the tide:

'And thou art now a spirit pouring
Thy presence into all:
The thunder of the tempest's roaring,
The whisper of its fall:

'An universal influence,
From thine own influence free;
A principle of life—intense—
Lost to mortality.

'Thus truly, when that breast is cold,
Thy prisoned soul shall rise;
The dungeon mingle with the mould—
The captive with the skies.
Nature's deep being, thine shall hold,
Her spirit all thy spirit fold,
Her breath absorb thy sighs.
Mortal! though soon life's tale is told;
Who once lives, never dies!'

LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

Love is like the wild rose-briar;
Friendship like the holly-tree.
The holly is dark when the rose-briar blooms,
But which will bloom most constantly?

The wild rose-briar is sweet in spring,
Its summer blossoms scent the air;
Yet wait till winter comes again,
And who will call the wild-briar fair?

Then, scorn the silly rose-wreath now,
And deck thee with the holly's sheen,
That, when December blights thy brow,
He still may leave thy garland green.

THE ELDER'S REBUKE

'Listen! When your hair, like mine,
Takes a tint of silver gray;
When your eyes, with dimmer shine,
Watch life's bubbles float away:

When you, young man, have borne like me
The weary weight of sixty-three,
Then shall penance sore be paid
  For those hours so wildly squandered;
And the words that now fall dead
  On your ear, be deeply pondered—
Pondered and approved at last:
But their virtue will be past!

'Glorious is the prize of Duty,
  Though she be a "serious power";
Treacherous all the lures of Beauty,
  Thorny bud and poisonous flower!

'Mirth is but a mad beguiling
  Of the golden-gifted time;
Love—a demon-meteor, wiling
  Heedless feet to gulfs of crime.

'Those who follow earthly pleasure,
  Heavenly knowledge will not lead;
Wisdom hides from them her treasure,
  Virtue bids them evil-speed;

'Vainly may their hearts repenting,
  Seek for aid in future years;
Wisdom, scorned, knows no relenting;
  Virtue is not won by fears.'

Thus spake the ice-blooded elder gray;
The young man scoffed as he turned away,
Turned to the call of a sweet lute's measure,
Waked by the lightsome touch of pleasure:
Had he ne'er met a gentler teacher,
Woe had been wrought by that pitiless preacher.

◆

THE WANDERER FROM THE FOLD

How few, of all the hearts that loved,
Are grieving for thee now ;
And why should mine to-night be moved
With such a sense of woe ?

Too often thus, when left alone,
Where none my thoughts can see,
Comes back a word, a passing tone
From thy strange history.

Sometimes I seem to see thee rise,
A glorious child again ;
All virtues beaming from thine eyes
That ever honoured men :

Courage and truth, a generous breast,
Where sinless sunshine lay :
A being whose very presence blest
Like gladsome summer-day.

Oh, fairly spread thy early sail,
And fresh, and pure, and free
Was the first impulse of the gale
Which urged life's wave for thee !

Why did the pilot, too confiding,
Dream o'er that ocean's foam,
And trust in Pleasure's careless guiding
To bring his vessel home ?

For well he knew what dangers frowned,
What mists would gather, dim ;
What rocks, and shelves, and sands lay round
Between his port and him.

The very brightness of the sun,
The splendour of the main,
The wind which bore him wildly on
Should not have warned in vain.

An anxious gazer from the shore—
I marked the whitening wave,
And wept above thy fate the more
Because—I could not save.

It recks not now, when all is over:
But yet my heart will be
A mourner still, though friend and lover
Have both forgotten thee!

WARNING AND REPLY

In the earth—the earth—thou shalt be laid,
A gray stone standing over thee;
Black mould beneath thee spread,
And black mould to cover thee.

'Well—there is rest there,
So fast come thy prophecy;
The time when my sunny hair
Shall with grass roots entwined be.'

But cold—cold is that resting-place,
Shut out from joy and liberty,
And all who loved thy living face
Will shrink from it shudderingly.

'Not so. *Here* the world is chill,
And sworn friends fall from me:
But *there*—they will own me still;
And prize my memory.'

Farewell, then, all that love,
All that deep sympathy.
Sleep on: Heaven laughs above,
Earth never misses thee.

Turf-sod and tombstone drear
Part human company;
One heart breaks only—here,
But that heart was worthy thee!

LAST WORDS

I KNEW not 'twas so dire a crime
To say the word, 'Adieu';
But this shall be the only time
My lips or heart shall sue.

The wild hill-side, the winter morn,
The gnarled and ancient tree,
If in your breast they waken scorn,
Shall wake the same in me.

I can forget black eyes and brows,
And lips of falsest charm,
If you forget the sacred vows
Those faithless lips could form.

If hard commands can tame your love,
Or strongest walls can hold,
I would not wish to grieve above
A thing so false and cold.

And there are bosoms bound to mine
With links both tried and strong;
And there are eyes whose lightning shine
Has warmed and blest me long:

Those eyes shall make my only day,
  Shall set my spirit free,
And chase the foolish thoughts away
  That mourn your memory.

THE LADY TO HER GUITAR

For him who struck thy foreign string,
  I ween this heart has ceased to care;
Then why dost thou such feelings bring
  To my sad spirit—old Guitar?

It is as if the warm sunlight
  In some deep glen should lingering stay,
When clouds of storm, or shades of night,
  Have wrapt the parent orb away.

It is as if the glassy brook
  Should image still its willows fair,
Though years ago the woodman's stroke
  Laid low in dust their Dryad-hair.

Even so, Guitar, thy magic tone
  Hath moved the tear and waked the sigh;
Hath bid the ancient torrent moan,
  Although its very source is dry.

THE TWO CHILDREN

Heavy hangs the rain-drop
  From the burdened spray;
Heavy broods the damp mist
  On uplands far away.

Heavy looms the dull sky,
  Heavy rolls the sea;
And heavy throbs the young heart
  Beneath that lonely tree.

Never has a blue streak
  Cleft the clouds since morn;
Never has his grim fate
  Smiled since he was born.

Frowning on the infant,
  Shadowing childhood's joy,
Guardian-angel knows not
  That melancholy boy.

Day is passing swiftly
  Its sad and sombre prime;
Boyhood sad is merging
  In sadder manhood's time:

All the flowers are praying
  For sun, before they close,
And he prays too—unconscious—
  That sunless human rose.

Blossom—that the west wind
  Has never wooed to blow,
Scentless are thy petals,
  Thy dew is cold as snow!

Soul—where kindred kindness,
  No early promise woke;
Barren is thy beauty,
  As weed upon a rock.

Wither—soul and blossom!
  You both were vainly given:
Earth reserves no blessing
  For the unblest of heaven!

Child of delight, with sun-bright hair,
  And sea-blue, sea-deep eyes!
Spirit of bliss! What brings thee here
  Beneath these sullen skies?

Thou shouldst live in eternal spring,
  Where endless day is never dim;
Why, Seraph, has thine erring wing
  Wafted thee down to weep with him?

'Ah! not from heaven am I descended,
  Nor do I come to mingle tears;
But sweet is day, though with shadows blended;
  And, though clouded, sweet are youthful years.

'I—the image of light and gladness—
  Saw and pitied that mournful boy,
And I vowed—if need were—to share his sadness,
  And give to him my sunny joy.

'Heavy and dark the night is closing;
  Heavy and dark may its biding be:
Better for all from grief reposing,
  And better for all who watch like me—

'Watch in love by a fevered pillow,
  Cooling the fever with pity's balm,
Safe as the petrel on tossing billow,
  Safe in mine own soul's golden calm!

'Guardian angel he lacks no longer;
  Evil fortune he need not fear:
Fate is strong, but love is stronger;
  And *my* love is truer than angel-care.'

THE VISIONARY

Silent is the house: all are laid asleep:
One alone looks out o'er the snow-wreaths deep,
Watching every cloud, dreading every breeze
That whirls the wildering drift, and bends the groaning trees.

Cheerful is the hearth, soft the matted floor;
Not one shivering gust creeps through pane or door;
The little lamp burns straight, its rays shoot strong and far:
I trim it well, to be the wanderer's guiding-star.

Frown, my haughty sire! chide, my angry dame!
Set your slaves to spy; threaten me with shame:
But neither sire nor dame, nor prying serf shall know,
What angel nightly tracks that waste of frozen snow.

What I love shall come like visitant of air,
Safe in secret power from lurking human snare;
What loves me, no word of mine shall e'er betray,
Though for faith unstained my life must forfeit pay.

Burn, then, little lamp; glimmer straight and clear—
Hush! a rustling wing stirs, methinks, the air:
He for whom I wait, thus ever comes to me;
Strange Power! I trust thy might; trust thou my constancy.

◆

ENCOURAGEMENT

I do not weep; I would not weep;
  Our mother needs no tears:
Dry thine eyes, too; 'tis vain to keep
  This causeless grief for years.

What though her brow be changed and cold,
  Her sweet eyes closed for ever?
What though the stone—the darksome mould
  Our mortal bodies sever?

What though her hand smooth ne'er again
  Those silken locks of thine?
Nor, through long hours of future pain,
  Her kind face o'er thee shine?

Remember still, she is not dead;
  She sees us, sister, now;
Laid, where her angel spirit fled,
  Mid heath and frozen snow.

And from that world of heavenly light
  Will she not always bend
To guide us in our lifetime's night,
  And guard us to the end?

Thou knowest she will; and thou may'st mourn
  That *we* are left below:
But not that she can ne'er return
  To share our earthly woe.

STANZAS

Often rebuked, yet always back returning
  To those first feelings that were born with me,
And leaving busy chase of wealth and learning
  For idle dreams of things which cannot be:

To-day, I will seek not the shadowy region;
  Its unsustaining vastness waxes drear;
And visions rising, legion after legion,
  Bring the unreal world too strangely near.

I'll walk, but not in old heroic traces,
And not in paths of high morality,
And not among the half-distinguished faces,
The clouded forms of long-past history.

I'll walk where my own nature would be leading:
It vexes me to choose another guide:
Where the gray flocks in ferny glens are feeding;
Where the wild wind blows on the mountain side.

What have those lonely mountains worth revealing?
More glory and more grief than I can tell:
The earth that wakes *one* human heart to feeling
Can centre both the worlds of Heaven and Hell.

◆

The following are the last lines my sister Emily ever wrote:

No coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere:
I see Heaven's glories shine,
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.

O God within my breast,
Almighty, ever-present Deity!
Life—that in me has rest,
As I—undying Life—have power in thee!

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts: unutterably vain;
Worthless as withered weeds,
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main,

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by thine infinity;
So surely anchored on
The steadfast rock of immortality.

With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears.

Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And Thou were left alone,
Every existence would exist in Thee.

There is not room for Death,
Nor atom that his might could render void:
Thou—THOU art Being and Breath,
And what THOU art may never be destroyed.

SELECTIONS

FROM

POEMS BY ACTON BELL

In looking over my sister Anne's papers, I find mournful evidence that religious feeling had been to her but too much like what it was to Cowper; I mean, of course, in a far milder form. Without rendering her a prey to those horrors that defy concealment, it subdued her mood and bearing to a perpetual pensiveness; the pillar of a cloud glided constantly before her eyes; she ever waited at the foot of a secret Sinai, listening in her heart to the voice of a trumpet sounding long and waxing louder. Some, perhaps, would rejoice over these tokens of sincere though sorrowing piety in a deceased relative: I own, to me they seem sad, as if her whole innocent life had been passed under the martyrdom of an unconfessed physical pain: their effect, indeed, would be too distressing, were it not combated by the certain knowledge that in her last moments this tyranny of a too tender conscience was overcome; this pomp of terrors broke up, and passing away, left her dying hour unclouded. Her belief in God did not then bring to her dread, as of a stern Judge,—but hope, as in a Creator and Saviour: and no faltering hope was it, but a sure and steadfast conviction, on which, in the rude passage from Time to Eternity, she threw the weight of her human weakness, and by which she was enabled to bear what was to be borne, patiently—serenely—victoriously.

DESPONDENCY

I HAVE gone backward in the work;
The labour has not sped;
Drowsy and dark my spirit lies,
Heavy and dull as lead.

How can I rouse my sinking soul
From such a lethargy?
How can I break these iron chains
And set my spirit free?

There have been times when I have mourned
In anguish o'er the past,
And raised my suppliant hands on high,
While tears fell thick and fast;

And prayed to have my sins forgiven,
With such a fervent zeal,
An earnest grief, a strong desire,
As now I cannot feel.

And I have felt so full of love,
So strong in spirit then,
As if my heart would never cool,
Or wander back again.

And yet, alas! how many times
My feet have gone astray!
How oft have I forgot my God!
How greatly fallen away!

My sins increase—my love grows cold,
And Hope within me dies:
Even Faith itself is wavering now;
Oh, how shall I arise?

I cannot weep, but I can pray,
Then let me not despair:
Lord Jesus, save me, lest I die;
Christ, hear my humble prayer!

◆

A PRAYER

My God (oh, let me call Thee mine,
Weak, wretched sinner though I be),
My trembling soul would fain be Thine;
My feeble faith still clings to Thee.

Not only for the Past I grieve,
The Future fills me with dismay;
Unless Thou hasten to relieve,
Thy suppliant is a castaway.

I cannot say my faith is strong,
I dare not hope my love is great;
But strength and love to Thee belong;
Oh, do not leave me desolate!

I know I owe my all to Thee;
Oh, *take* the heart I cannot give!
Do Thou my strength—my Saviour be,
And *make* me to Thy glory live.

◆

IN MEMORY OF A HAPPY DAY IN FEBRUARY

Blessed be Thou for all the joy
My soul has felt to-day!
Oh, let its memory stay with me,
And never pass away!

I was alone, for those I loved
  Were far away from me;
The sun shone on the withered grass,
  The wind blew fresh and free.

Was it the smile of early spring
  That made my bosom glow?
'Twas sweet; but neither sun nor wind
  Could cheer my spirit so.

Was it some feeling of delight,
  All vague and undefined?
No; 'twas a rapture deep and strong,
  Expanding in the mind.

Was it a sanguine view of life,
  And all its transient bliss,
A hope of bright prosperity?
  Oh, no! it was not this.

It was a glimpse of truth divine
  Unto my spirit given,
Illumined by a ray of light
  That shone direct from heaven.

I felt there was a God on high,
  By whom all things were made;
I saw His wisdom and His power
  In all His works displayed.

But most throughout the moral world,
  I saw His glory shine;
I saw His wisdom infinite,
  His mercy all divine.

Deep secrets of His providence,
  In darkness long concealed,
Unto the vision of my soul
  Were graciously revealed.

But while I wondered and adored
His Majesty divine,
I did not tremble at His power:
I felt that God was mine.

I knew that my Redeemer lived;
I did not fear to die;
Full sure that I should rise again
To immortality.

I longed to view that bliss divine,
Which eye hath never seen;
Like Moses, I would see His face
Without the veil between.

◆

CONFIDENCE

Oppressed with sin and woe,
A burdened heart I bear,
Opposed by many a mighty foe;
But I will not despair.

With this polluted heart,
I dare to come to Thee,
Holy and mighty as Thou art,
For Thou wilt pardon me.

I feel that I am weak,
And prone to every sin;
But Thou who giv'st to those who seek,
Wilt give me strength within.

Far as this earth may be
From yonder starry skies;
Remoter still am I from Thee:
Yet Thou wilt not despise.

I need not fear my foes,
I need not yield to care;
I need not sink beneath my woes,
For Thou wilt answer prayer.

In my Redeemer's name,
I give myself to Thee;
And, all unworthy as I am,
My God will cherish me.

◆

THE NARROW WAY

Believe not those who say
The upward path is smooth,
Lest thou shouldst stumble in the way,
And faint before the truth.

It is the only road
Unto the realms of joy;
But he who seeks that blest abode
Must all his powers employ.

Bright hopes and pure delight
Upon his course may beam,
And there, amid the sternest heights
The sweetest flowerets gleam.

On all her breezes borne,
Earth yields no scents like those;
But he that dares not grasp the thorn
Should never crave the rose.

Arm—arm thee for the fight!
Cast useless loads away;
Watch through the darkest hours of night,
Toil through the hottest day.

Crush pride into the dust,
Or thou must needs be slack;
And trample down rebellious lust,
Or it will hold thee back.

Seek not thy honour here;
Waive pleasure and renown;
The world's dread scoff undaunted bear,
And face its deadliest frown.

To labour and to love,
To pardon and endure,
To lift thy heart to God above,
And keep thy conscience pure;

Be this thy constant aim,
Thy hope, thy chief delight;
What matter who should whisper blame,
Or who should scorn or slight?

What matter, if thy God approve,
And if, within thy breast,
Thou feel the comfort of His love,
The earnest of His rest?

◆

DOMESTIC PEACE

Why should such gloomy silence reign,
And why is all the house so drear,
When neither danger, sickness, pain,
Nor death, nor want, have entered here?

We are as many as we were
That other night, when all were gay
And full of hope, and free from care;
Yet is there something gone away.

The moon without, as pure and calm,
Is shining as that night she shone;
But now, to us, she brings no balm,
For something from our hearts is gone.

Something whose absence leaves a void—
A cheerless want in every heart;
Each feels the bliss of all destroyed,
And mourns the change—but each apart.

The fire is burning in the grate
As redly as it used to burn;
But still the hearth is desolate,
Till mirth, and love, and *peace* return.

'Twas *peace* that flowed from heart to heart,
With looks and smiles that spoke of heaven,
And gave us language to impart
The blissful thoughts itself had given.

Domestic peace! best joy of earth,
When shall we all thy value learn?
White angel, to our sorrowing hearth,
Return—oh, graciously return!

◆

THE THREE GUIDES[1]

Spirit of Earth! thy hand is chill:
I've felt its icy clasp;
And, shuddering, I remember still
That stony-hearted grasp.
Thine eye bids love and joy depart:
Oh, turn its gaze from me!
It presses down my shrinking heart;
I will not walk with thee!

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[1] First published in *Fraser's Magazine*.

'Wisdom is mine,' I've heard thee say:
'Beneath my searching eye
All mist and darkness melt away,
Phantoms and fables fly.
Before me truth can stand alone,
The naked, solid truth;
And man matured by worth will own,
If I am shunned by youth.

'Firm is my tread, and sure though slow;
My footsteps never slide;
And he that follows me shall know
I am the surest guide.'
Thy boast is vain; but were it true
That thou couldst safely steer
Life's rough and devious pathway through,
Such guidance I should fear.

How could I bear to walk for aye,
With eyes to earthward prone,
O'er trampled weeds and miry clay,
And sand and flinty stone;
Never the glorious view to greet
Of hill and dale and sky;
To see that Nature's charms are sweet,
Or feel that Heaven is nigh?

If in my heart arose a spring,
A gush of thought divine,
At once stagnation thou wouldst bring
With that cold touch of thine.
If, glancing up, I sought to snatch
But one glimpse of the sky,
My baffled gaze would only catch
Thy heartless, cold grey eye.

If to the breezes wandering near
  I listened eagerly,
And deemed an angel's tongue to hear
  That whispered hope to me,
That heavenly music would be drowned
  In thy harsh, droning voice;
Nor inward thought, nor sight, nor sound
  Might my sad soul rejoice.

Dull is thine ear, unheard by thee
  The still, small voice of Heaven;
Thine eyes are dim and cannot see
  The helps that God has given.
There is a bridge o'er every flood
  Which thou canst not perceive;
A path through every tangled wood,
  But thou wilt not believe.

Striving to make thy way by force,
  Toil-spent and bramble-torn,
Thou'lt fell the tree that checks thy course,
  And burst through brier and thorn:
And, pausing by the river's side,
  Poor reasoner! thou wilt deem,
By casting pebbles in its tide,
  To cross the swelling stream.

Right through the flinty rock thou'lt try
  Thy toilsome way to bore,
Regardless of the pathway nigh
  That would conduct thee o'er.
Not only art thou, then, unkind,
  And freezing cold to me,
But unbelieving, deaf, and blind:
  I will not walk with thee!

Spirit of Pride! thy wings are strong,
Thine eyes like lightning shine;
Ecstatic joys to thee belong,
And powers almost divine.
But 'tis a false, destructive blaze
Within those eyes I see;
Turn hence their fascinating gaze;
I will not follow thee.

'Coward and fool!' thou may'st reply,
'Walk on the common sod;
Go, trace with timid foot and eye
The steps by others trod.
'Tis best the beaten path to keep,
The ancient faith to hold;
To pasture with thy fellow-sheep,
And lie within the fold.

'Cling to the earth, poor grovelling worm;
'Tis not for thee to soar
Against the fury of the storm,
Amid the thunder's roar!
There's glory in that daring strife
Unknown, undreamt by thee;
There's speechless rapture in the life
Of those who follow me.'

Yes, I have seen thy votaries oft,
Upheld by thee their guide,
In strength and courage mount aloft
The steepy mountain-side;
I've seen them stand against the sky,
And gazing from below,
Beheld thy lightning in their eye,
Thy triumph on their brow.

Oh, I have felt what glory then,
  What transport must be theirs!
So far above their fellow-men,
  Above their toils and cares;
Inhaling Nature's purest breath,
  Her riches round them spread,
The wide expanse of earth beneath,
  Heaven's glories overhead!

But I have seen them helpless, dash'd
  Down to a bloody grave,
And still thy ruthless eye has flash'd,
  Thy strong hand did not save;
I've seen some o'er the mountain's brow
  Sustain'd awhile by thee,
O'er rocks of ice and hills of snow
  Bound fearless, wild, and free.

Bold and exultant was their mien,
  While thou didst cheer them on;
But evening fell,—and then, I ween,
  Their faithless guide was gone.
Alas! how fared thy favourites then—
  Lone, helpless, weary, cold?
Did ever wanderer find again
  The path he left of old?

Where is their glory, where the pride
  That swelled their hearts before?
Where now the courage that defied
  The mightiest tempest's roar?
What shall they do when night grows black,
  When angry storms arise?
Who now will lead them to the track
  Thou taught'st them to despise?

Spirit of Pride! it needs not this
  To make me shun thy wiles,
Renounce thy triumph and thy bliss,
  Thy honours and thy smiles!
Bright as thou art, and bold, and strong,
  That fierce glance wins not me,
And I abhor thy scoffing tongue—
  I will not follow thee!

Spirit of Faith! be thou my guide,
  Oh clasp my hand in thine,
And let me never quit thy side;
  Thy comforts are divine!
Earth calls thee blind, misguided one,—
  But who can show like thee
Forgotten things that have been done,
  And things that are to be?

Secrets conceal'd from Nature's ken,
  Who like thee can declare?
Or who like thee to erring men
  God's holy will can bear?
Pride scorns thee for thy lowly mien,—
  But who like thee can rise
Above this toilsome, sordid scene,
  Beyond the holy skies?

Meek is thine eye and soft thy voice,
  But wondrous is thy might,
To make the wretched soul rejoice,
  To give the simple light!
And still to all that seek thy way
  This magic power is given,—
E'en while their footsteps press the clay,
  Their souls ascend to heaven.

Danger surrounds them,—pain and woe
  Their portion here must be,
But only they that trust thee know
  What comfort dwells with thee;
Strength to sustain their drooping pow'rs,
  And vigour to defend,—
Thou pole-star of my darkest hours,
  Affliction's firmest friend!

Day does not always mark our way,
  Night's shadows oft appal,
But lead me, and I cannot stray,—
  Hold me, I shall not fall;
Sustain me, I shall never faint,
  How rough soe'er may be
My upward road,—nor moan, nor plaint
  Shall mar my trust in thee.

Narrow the path by which we go,
  And oft it turns aside
From pleasant meads where roses blow,
  And peaceful waters glide;
Where flowery turf lies green and soft,
  And gentle gales are sweet,
To where dark mountains frown aloft,
  Hard rocks distress the feet,—

Deserts beyond lie bleak and bare,
  And keen winds round us blow;
But if thy hand conducts me there,
  The way is right, I know.
I have no wish to turn away;
  My spirit does not quail,—
How can it while I hear thee say,
  'Press forward and prevail!'

Even above the tempest's swell
  I hear thy voice of love,—
Of hope and peace, I hear thee tell,
  And that blest home above;
Through pain and death I can rejoice,
  If but thy strength be mine,—
Earth hath no music like thy voice,
  Life owns no joy like thine!

Spirit of Faith, I'll go with thee!
  Thou, if I hold thee fast,
Wilt guide, defend, and strengthen me,
  And bear me home at last;
By thy help all things I can do,
  In thy strength all things bear,—
Teach me, for thou art just and true,
  Smile on me, thou art fair!

* * *

I have given the last memento of my sister Emily; this is the last of my sister Anne:—

I HOPED, that with the brave and strong,
  My portioned task might lie;
To toil amid the busy throng,
  With purpose pure and high.

But God has fixed another part,
  And He has fixed it well;
I said so with my bleeding heart,
  When first the anguish fell.

Thou, God, hast taken our delight,
  Our treasured hope away:
Thou bidst us now weep through the night
  And sorrow through the day.

These weary hours will not be lost,
  These days of misery,
These nights of darkness, anguish-tost,
  Can I but turn to Thee:

With secret labour to sustain
  In humble patience every blow;
To gather fortitude from pain,
  And hope and holiness from woe.

Thus let me serve Thee from my heart,
  Whate'er may be my written fate:
Whether thus early to depart,
  Or yet a while to wait.

If Thou shouldst bring me back to life,
  More humbled I should be;
More wise—more strengthened for the strife—
  More apt to lean on Thee.

Should death be standing at the gate,
  Thus should I keep my vow:
But, Lord! whatever be my fate,
  Oh, let me serve Thee now!

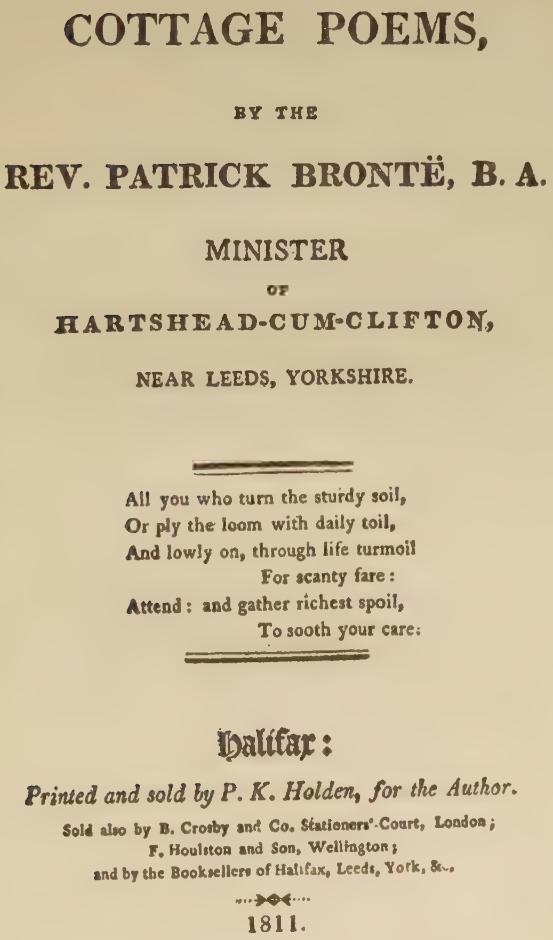
These lines written, the desk was closed, the pen laid aside—for ever.

COTTAGE POEMS

BY THE

REV. PATRICK BRONTË, B.A.

Facsimile of the Title-page of the First Edition.



COTTAGE POEMS,

BY THE

REV. PATRICK BRONTË, B. A.

MINISTER

OF

HARTSHEAD-CUM-CLIFTON,

NEAR LEEDS, YORKSHIRE.

All you who turn the sturdy soil,
Or ply the loom with daily toil,
And lowly on, through life turmoil
For scanty fare:
Attend: and gather richest spoil,
To sooth your care:

Halifax:

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1811.

COTTAGE POEMS

EPISTLE TO THE REV. J—— B——, WHILST JOURNEYING FOR THE RECOVERY OF HIS HEALTH

When warm'd with zeal, my rustic Muse
Feels fluttering fain to tell her news,
And paint her simple, lowly views
With all her art,
And, though in genius but obtuse,
May touch the heart.

Of palaces and courts of kings
She thinks but little, never sings,
But wildly strikes her uncouth strings
In some poor cot,
Spreads o'er the poor her fostering wings,
And soothes their lot.

Well pleased is she to see them smile,
And uses every honest wile
To mend their hearts, their cares beguile,
With rhyming story,
And lead them to their God the while,
And endless glory.

Perchance, my poor neglected Muse,
Unfit to harass or amuse,
Escaping praise and loud abuse,
Unheard, unknown,
May feed the moths and wasting dews,
As some have done.

Her aims are good, howe'er they end—
Here comes a foe, and there a friend,
These point the dart and those defend,
Whilst some deride her;
But God will sweetest comforts blend,
Whate'er betide her.

Thus heaven-supported, forth she goes
Midst flatterers, critics, friends, and foes;
Secure, since He who all things knows
Approves her aim,
And kindly fans, or fostering blows
Her sinking flame.

Hence, when she shows her honest face,
And tells her tale with awkward grace,
Importunate to gain a place
Amongst your friends,
To ruthless critics leave her case,
And hail her ends.

To all my heart is kind and true,
But glows with ardent love for you;
Though absent, still you rise in view,
And talk and smile,
Whilst heavenly themes, for ever new,
Our cares beguile.

The happy seasons oft return,
When love our melting hearts did burn,
As we through heavenly themes were borne
With heavenward eyes,
And Faith this empty globe would spurn,
And sail the skies.

Or, when the rising sun shines bright,
Or, setting, leaves the world in night,
Or, dazzling, sheds his noon-day light,
Or, cloudy, hides,
My fancy, in her airy flight,
With you resides.

Where far you wander down the vale,
When balmy scents perfume the gale,
And purling rills and linnets hail
The King of kings,
To muse with you I never fail,
On heavenly things.

Where dashing cataracts astound,
And foaming shake the neighbouring ground,
And spread a hoary mist around,
With you I gaze !—
And think, amidst the deaf'ning sound,
On wisdom's ways !

Where rocky mountains prop the skies,
And round the smiling landscape lies,
Whilst you look down with tearful eyes
On grovelling man,
My sympathetic fancy flies,
The scene to scan.

From Pisgah's top we then survey
The blissful realms of endless day,
And all the short but narrow way
That lies between,
Whilst Faith emits a heavenly ray,
And cheers the scene.

With you I wander on the shore
To hear the angry surges roar,
Whilst foaming through the sands they pour
With constant roll,
And meditations heavenward soar,
And charm the soul.

On life's rough sea we're tempest-driven
In crazy barks, our canvas riven :
Such is the lot to mortals given
Where sins resort :
But he whose anchor's fixed in heaven
Shall gain the port.

Though swelling waves oft beat him back,
And tempests make him half a wreck,
And passions strong, with dangerous tack,
Retard his course,
Yet Christ the pilot all will check,
And quell their force.

So talk we as we thoughtful stray
Along the coast, where dashing spray
With rising mist o'erhangs the day,
And wets the shore,
And thick the vivid flashes play
And thunders roar !

Whilst passing o'er this giddy stage,
A pious and a learned sage
Resolved eternal war to wage
With passions fell:
How oft you view with holy rage
These imps of hell!

See! with what madd'ning force they sway
The human breast and lead astray,
Down the steep, broad, destructive way,
The giddy throng;
Till grisly death sweeps all away
The fiends among!

As when the mad tornado flies,
And sounding mingles earth and skies,
And wild confusion 'fore the eyes
In terror's dressed,
So passions fell in whirlwinds rise,
And rend the breast!

But whilst this direful tempest raves,
And many barks are dashed to staves,
I see you tower above the waves
Like some tall rock,
Whose base the harmless ocean laves
Without a shock!

'Tis He who calmed the raging sea,
Who bids the waves be still in thee,
And keeps you from all dangers free
Amidst the wreck;
All sin, and care, and dangers flee
E'en at his beck.

And on that great and dreadful day
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
Each soul to bliss he will convey,
That knows his name;
And give the giddy world a prey
To quenchless flame.

So oft when Sabbaths bade us rest,
And heavenly zeal inspired your breast,
Obedient to the high behest
You preached to all,
Whilst God your zealous efforts blessed,
And owned your call.

The very thought my soul inspires,
And kindles bright her latent fires;
My Muse feels heart-warm fond desires,
And spreads her wing,
And aims to join th' angelic choirs,
And sweetly sing.

May rosy Health with speed return,
And all your wonted ardour burn,
And sickness buried in his urn,
Sleep many years!
So, countless friends who loudly mourn,
Shall dry their tears!

Your wailing flock will all rejoice
To hear their much-loved shepherd's voice,
And long will bless the happy choice
Their hearts have made,
And tuneful mirth will swell the noise
Through grove and glade.

Your dearer half will join with me
To celebrate the jubilee,
And praise the Great Eternal Three
With throbbing joy,
And taste those pleasures pure and free
Which never cloy.

THE HAPPY COTTAGERS

One sunny morn of May,
When dressed in flowery green
The dewy landscape, charmed
With Nature's fairest scene,
In thoughtful mood
I slowly strayed
O'er hill and dale,
Through bush and glade.

Throughout the cloudless sky
Of light unsullied blue,
The larks their matins raised,
Whilst on my dizzy view,
Like dusty motes,
They winged their way
Till vanished in
The blaze of day.

The linnets sweetly sung
On every fragrant thorn,
Whilst from the tangled wood
The blackbirds hailed the morn;
And through the dew
Ran here and there,
But half afraid,
The startled hare.

The balmy breeze just kissed
The countless dewy gems
Which decked the yielding blade
Or gilt the sturdy stems,
And gently o'er
The charmed sight
A deluge shed
Of trembling light.

A sympathetic glow
Ran through my melting soul,
And calm and sweet delight
O'er all my senses stole;
And through my heart
A grateful flood
Of joy rolled on
To Nature's God.

Time flew unheeded by,
Till wearied and oppressed,
Upon a flowery bank
I laid me down to rest;
Beneath my feet
A purling stream
Ran glittering in
The noontide beam.

I turnèd me round to view
The lovely rural scene;
And, just at hand, I spied
A cottage on the green;
The street was clean,
The walls were white,
The thatch was neat,
The window bright.

Bold chanticleer, arrayed
  In velvet plumage gay,
With many an amorous dame,
  Fierce strutted o'er the way;
      And motley ducks
        Were waddling seen,
      And drake with neck
        Of glossy green.

The latch I gently raised,
  And oped the humble door;
An oaken stool was placed
  On the neat sanded floor;
      An aged man
        Said with a smile,
      'You're welcome, sir:
        Come rest a while.'

His coarse attire was clean,
  His manner rude yet kind:
His air, his words, and looks
  Showed a contented mind;
      Though mean and poor,
        Thrice happy he,
      As by our tale
        You soon shall see.

But don't expect to hear
  Of deeds of martial fame,
Or that our peasant mean
  Was born of rank or name,
      And soon will strut,
        As in romance,
      A knight and all
        In armour glance.

I sing of real life;
  All else is empty show—
To those who read a source
  Of much unreal woe;
    Pollution, too,
      Through novel-veins,
    Oft fills the mind
      With guilty stains.

Our peasant long was bred
  Affliction's meagre child,
Yet gratefully resigned,
  Loud hymning praises, smiled,
    And like a tower
      He stood unmoved,
    Supported by
      The God he loved.

His loving wife long since
  Was numbered with the dead;
His son, a martial youth,
  Had for his country bled;
    And now remained
      One daughter fair,
    And only she,
      To soothe his care.

The aged man with tears
  Spoke of the lovely maid;
How earnestly she strove
  To lend her father aid,
    And as he ran
      Her praises o'er,
    She gently oped
      The cottage-door.

With vegetable store
The table soon she spread,
And pressed me to partake ;
Whilst blushes rosy-red
Suffused her face—
The old man smiled,
Well pleased to see
His darling child.

With venerable air
He then looked up to God,
A blessing craved on all,
And on our daily food ;
Then kindly begged
I would excuse
Their humble fare,
And not refuse.—

The tablecloth, though coarse,
Was of a snowy white,
The vessels, spoons, and knives
Were clean and dazzling bright ;
So down we sat
Devoid of care,
Nor envied kings
Their dainty fare.

When nature was refreshed,
And we familiar grown,
The good old man exclaimed,
'Around Jehovah's throne,
Come, let us all
Our voices raise,
And sing our great
Redeemer's praise!'

Their artless notes were sweet,
Grace ran through every line;
Their breasts with rapture swelled,
Their looks were all divine:
Delight o'er all
My senses stole,
And heaven's pure joy
O'erwhelmed my soul.

When we had praised our God,
And knelt around His throne,
The aged man began
In deep and zealous tone,
With hands upraised
And heavenward eye,
And prayed aloud
And fervently:

He prayed that for His sake,
Whose guiltless blood was shed
For guilty ruined man,
We might that day be fed
With that pure bread
Which cheers the soul,
And living stream
Where pleasures roll.

He prayed long for all,
And for his daughter dear,
That she, preserved from ill,
Might lead for many a year
A spotless life
When he's no more;
Then follow him
To Canaan's shore.

His faltering voice then fell,
His tears were dropping fast,
And muttering praise to God
For all His mercies past,
He closed his prayer
Midst heavenly joys,
And tasted bliss
Which never cloys.

In sweet discourse we spent
The fast declining day:
We spoke of Jesus' love,
And of that narrow way
Which leads, through care
And toil below,
To streams where joys
Eternal flow.

The wondrous plan of Grace,
Adoring, we surveyed,
The birth of heavenly skill—
In Love Eternal laid—
Too deep for clear
Angelic ken,
And far beyond
Dim-sighted men.

To tell you all that passed
Would far exceed my power;
Suffice it, then, to say,
Joy winged the passing hour,
Till, ere we knew,
The setting day
Had clad the world
In silver grey.

I kindly took my leave,
  And blessed the happy lot
Of those I left behind
  Lodged in their humble cot;
    And pitied some
      In palace walls,
    Where pride torments
      And pleasure palls.

The silver moon now shed
  A flood of trembling light
On tower, and tree, and stream;
  The twinkling stars shone bright;
    Nor misty stain
      Nor cloud was seen
    O'er all the deep
      Celestial green.

Mild was the lovely night,
  Nor stirred a whispering breeze;
Smooth was the glassy lake,
  And still the leafy trees;
    No sound in air
      Was heard afloat,
    Save Philomel's
      Sweet warbling note.

My thoughts were on the wing,
  And back my fancy fled
To where contentment dwelt
  In the neat humble shed;
    To shining courts
      From thence it ran,
    Where restless pride
      Oppresses man.

In fame some search for bliss,
Some seek content in gain,
In search of happiness
Some give the slackened rein
To passions fierce,
And down the stream,
Through giddy life,
Of pleasures dream.

These all mistake the way,
As many more have done:
The narrow path of bliss
Through God's Eternal Son
Directly tends;
And only he
Who treads this path
Can happy be.

Who anchors all above
Has still a happy lot,
Though doomed for life to dwell
E'en in a humble cot,
And when he lays
This covering down
He'll wear a bright
Immortal crown.

◆

THE RAINBOW

The shower is past, and the sky
O'erhead is both mild and serene,
Save where a few drops from on high,
Like gems, twinkle over the green:

And glowing fair, in the black north,
The rainbow o'er-arches the cloud;
The sun in his glory comes forth,
And larks sweetly warble aloud.

That dismally grim northern sky
Says God in his vengeance once frowned,
And opened his flood-gates on high,
Till obstinate sinners were drowned:
The lively bright south, and that bow,
Say all this dread vengeance is o'er;
These colours that smilingly glow
Say we shall be deluged no more.

Ever blessed be those innocent days,
Ever sweet their remembrance to me;
When often, in silent amaze,
Enraptured, I'd gaze upon thee!
Whilst arching adown the black sky
Thy colours glowed on the green hill,
To catch thee as lightning I'd fly,
But aye you eluded my skill.

From hill unto hill your gay scene
You shifted—whilst crying aloud,
I ran, till at length from the green,
You shifted, at once, to the cloud!
So, vain worldly phantoms betray
The youths who too eager pursue,
When ruined and far led astray,
Th' illusion escapes from their view.

Those peaceable days knew no care,
Except what arose from my play,
My favourite lambkin and hare,
And cabin I built o'er the way.

No cares did I say? Ah! I'm wrong:
  Even childhood from cares is not free:
Far distant I see a grim throng
  Shake horrible lances at me!

One day—I remember it still—
  For pranks I had played on the clown
Who lived on a neighbouring hill,
  My cabin was trod to the ground.
Who ever felt grief such as I
  When crushed by this terrible blow!
Not Priam, the monarch of Troy,
  When all his proud towers lay low.

And grief upon grief was my lot:
  Soon after, my lambkin was slain;
My hare, having strayed from its cot,
  Was chased by the hounds o'er the plain.
What countless calamities teem
  From memory's page on my view!—
How trifling soever you seem,
  Yet once I have wept over you.

Then cease, foolish heart, to repine;
  No stage is exempted from care:
If you would true happiness find,
  Come follow; and I'll show you where.
But, first, let us take for our guide
  The Word which Jehovah has penned;
By this the true path is descried
  Which leads to a glorious end.

How narrow this path to our view!
  How steep an ascent lies before!
Whilst, foolish fond heart, laid for you
  Are dazzling temptations all o'er.

What by-ways with easy descent
Invite us through pleasures to stray!
Whilst Satan, with hellish intent,
Suggests that we ought to obey.

But trust not the father of lies,
He tempts you with vanity's dream;
His pleasure, when touched, quickly dies,
Like bubbles that dance on the stream.
Look not on the wine when it glows
All ruddy, in vessels of gold;
At last it will sting your repose,
And death at the bottom unfold.[1]

But lo! an unnatural night
Pours suddenly down on the eye;
The sun has withdrawn all his light,
And rolls a black globe o'er the sky!
And hark! what a cry rent the air!
Immortal the terrible sound!
The rocks split with horrible tear,
And fearfully shakes all the ground!

The dead from their slumbers awake,
And, leaving their mouldy domain,
Make poor guilty mortals to quake
As pallid they glide o'er the plain!
Sure Nature's own God is oppressed,
And Nature in agony cries;—
The sun in his mourning is dressed,
To tell the sad news through the skies!

Yet surely some victory's gained,
Important, and novel, and great,
Since Death has his captives unchained
And widely thrown open his gate!

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[1] Proverbs xxiii. 31, 32.

Yes, victory great as a God
Could gain over hell, death, and sin,
This moment's achieved by the blood
Of Jesus, our crucified King.

But all the dread conflict is o'er;
Lo! cloud after cloud rolls away;
And heaven, serene as before,
Breaks forth in the splendour of day;
And all the sweet landscape around,
Emerged from the ocean of night,
With groves, woods, and villages crowned,
Astonish and fill with delight!

But see! where that crowd melts away,
Three crosses sad spectacles show!
Our Guide has not led us astray;
Heart! this is the secret you'd know—
Two thieves, and a crucified God
Hangs awfully mangled between!
Whilst fast from his veins spouting blood
Runs, dyeing with purple the green!

Behold! the red flood rolls along,
And forming a bason below,
Is termed in Emanuel's song
The fount for uncleanness and woe.
Immerged in that precious tide,
The soul quickly loses its stains,
Though deeper than crimson they're dyed,
And 'scapes from its sorrows and pains.

This fountain is opened for you:
Go, wash, without money or price,
And instantly formed anew,
You'll lose all your woes in a trice.

Then cease, foolish heart, to repine,
No stage is exempted from care;
If you would true happiness find,
'Tis on Calvary—seek for it there.

* * *

WINTER-NIGHT MEDITATIONS

Rude winter's come, the sky's o'ercast,
The night is cold and loud the blast,
The mingling snow comes driving down,
Fast whitening o'er the flinty ground.
Severe their lots whose crazy sheds
Hang tottering o'er their trembling heads:
Whilst blows through walls and chinky door
The drifting snow across the floor,
Where blinking embers scarcely glow,
And rushlight only serves to show
What well may move the deepest sigh,
And force a tear from pity's eye.
You there may see a meagre pair,
Worn out with labour, grief, and care:
Whose naked babes, in hungry mood,
Complain of cold and cry for food;
Whilst tears bedew the mother's cheek,
And sighs the father's grief bespeak;
For fire or raiment, bed or board,
Their dreary shed cannot afford.

Will no kind hand confer relief,
And wipe away the tear of grief?
A little boon it well might spare
Would kindle joy, dispel their care,
Abate the rigour of the night,
And warm each heart—achievement bright!

Yea, brighter far than such as grace
The annals of a princely race,
Where kings bestow a large domain
But to receive as much again,
Or e'en corrupt the purest laws,
Or fan the breath of vain applause.

Peace to the man who stoops his head
To enter the most wretched shed:
Who, with his condescending smiles,
Poor diffidence and awe beguiles:
Till all encouraged, soon disclose
The different causes of their woes—
The moving tale dissolves his heart;
He liberally bestows a part
Of God's donation. From above
Approving Heaven, in smiles of love,
Looks on, and through the shining skies
The great Recording Angel flies
The doors of mercy to unfold,
And write the deed in lines of gold;
There, if a fruit of Faith's fair tree,
To shine throughout eternity,
In honour of that Sovereign dread,
Who had no place to lay His head,
Yet opened wide sweet Mercy's door
To all the desolate and poor,
Who, stung with guilt and hard oppressed,
Groaned to be with Him, and at rest.

Now, pent within the city wall,
They throng to theatre and hall,
Where gesture, look, and words conspire
To stain the mind, the passions fire;
Whence sin-polluted streams abound,
That whelm the country all around.

Ah! Modesty, should you be here,
Close up the eye and stop the ear;
Oppose your fan, nor peep beneath,
And blushing shun their tainted breath.

Here every rake exerts his art
T' ensnare the unsuspecting heart.
The prostitute, with faithless smiles,
Remorseless plays her tricks and wiles.
Her gesture bold and ogling eye,
Obtrusive speech and pert reply,
And brazen front and stubborn tone,
Show all her native virtue's flown.
By her the thoughtless youth is ta'en,
Impoverished, disgraced, or slain:
Through her the marriage vows are broke,
And Hymen proves a galling yoke.
Diseases come, destruction's dealt,
Where'er her poisonous breath is felt;
Whilst she, poor wretch, dies in the flame
That runs through her polluted frame.

Once she was gentle, fair, and kind,
To no seducing schemes inclined,
Would blush to hear a smutty tale,
Nor ever strolled o'er hill or dale,
But lived a sweet domestic maid,
To lend her aged parents aid—
And oft they gazed and oft they smiled
On this their loved and only child:
They thought they might in her be blest,
And she would see them laid at rest.

A blithesome youth of courtly mien
Oft called to see this rural queen:
His oily tongue and wily art
Soon gained Maria's yielding heart.

The aged pair, too, liked the youth,
And thought him nought but love and truth.
The village feast at length is come ;
Maria by the youth's undone :
The youth is gone—so is her fame ;
And with it all her sense of shame :
And now she practises the art
Which snared her unsuspecting heart;
And vice, with a progressive sway,
More hardened makes her every day.
Averse to good and prone to ill,
And dexterous in seducing skill;
To look, as if her eyes would melt :
T' affect a love she never felt ;
To half suppress the rising sigh ;
Mechanically to weep and cry ;
To vow eternal truth, and then
To break her vow, and vow again :
Her ways are darkness, death, and hell:
Remorse and shame and passions fell,
And short-lived joy, with endless pain,
Pursue her in a gloomy train.

O Britain fair, thou queen of isles !
Nor hostile arms nor hostile wiles
Could ever shake thy solid throne
But for thy sins. Thy sins alone
Can make thee stoop thy royal head,
And lay thee prostrate with the dead.
In vain colossal England mows,
With ponderous strength, the yielding foes ;
In vain fair Scotia, by her side,
With courage flushed and Highland pride,
Whirls her keen blade with horrid whistle,
And lops off heads like tops of thistle ;
In vain brave Erin, famed afar,

The flaming thunderbolt of war,
Profuse of life, through blood does wade,
To lend her sister kingdom aid:
Our conquering thunders vainly roar
Terrific round the Gallic shore;
Profoundest statesmen vainly scheme—
'Tis all a vain, delusive dream,
If treacherously within our breast
We foster sin, the deadly pest.

Where Sin abounds Religion dies,
And Virtue seeks her native skies;
Chaste Conscience hides for very shame,
And Honour's but an empty name.
Then, like a flood, with fearful din,
A gloomy host comes pouring in.
First Bribery, with her golden shield,
Leads smooth corruption o'er the field;
Dissension wild, with brandished spear,
And Anarchy bring up the rear:
Whilst Care and Sorrow, Grief and Pain
Run howling o'er the bloody plain.

O Thou, whose power resistless fills
The boundless whole, avert those ills
We richly merit: purge away
The sins which on our vitals prey;
Protect, with Thine almighty shield
Our conquering arms by flood and field,
Wheel round the time when Peace shall smile
O'er Britain's highly-favoured Isle;
When all shall loud hosannas sing
To Thee, the great Eternal King!

But hark! the bleak, loud whistling wind!
Its crushing blast recalls to mind

The dangers of the troubled deep;
Where, with a fierce and thundering sweep,
The winds in wild distraction rave,
And push along the mountain wave
With dreadful swell and hideous curl!
Whilst hung aloft in giddy whirl,
Or dropt beneath the ocean's bed,
The leaky bark without a shred
Of rigging sweeps through dangers dread.
The flaring beacon points the way,
And fast the pumps loud clanking play:
It 'vails not—hark! with crashing shock
She's shivered 'gainst the solid rock,
Or by the fierce, incessant waves
Is beaten to a thousand staves;
Or, bilging at her crazy side,
Admits the thundering hostile tide,
And down she sinks!—triumphant rave
The winds, and close her wat'ry grave!

The merchant's care and toil are vain,
His hopes lie buried in the main—
In vain the mother's tearful eye
Looks for its sole remaining joy—
In vain fair Susan walks the shore,
And sighs for him she'll see no more—
For deep they lie in ocean's womb,
And fester in a wat'ry tomb.

Now, from the frothy, thundering main,
My meditations seek the plain,
Where, with a swift fantastic flight,
They scour the regions of the night,
Free as the winds that wildly blow
O'er hill and dale the blinding snow,
Or, through the woods, their frolics play,
And whirling, sweep the dusty way,

When summer shines with burning glare,
And sportive breezes skim the air,
And Ocean's glassy breast is fanned
To softest curl by Zephyr bland.

But Summer's gone, and Winter here
With iron sceptre rules the year—
Beneath this dark, inclement sky
How many wanderers faint and die!
One, flouncing o'er the treacherous snow,
Sinks in the pit that yawns below!
Another numbed, with panting lift
Inhales the suffocating drift!
And creeping cold, with stiffening force,
Extends a third, a pallid corse!

Thus death, in varied dreadful form,
Triumphant rides along the storm:
With shocking scenes assails the sight,
And makes more sad the dismal night!
How blest the man, whose lot is free
From such distress and misery;
Who, sitting by his blazing fire,
Is closely wrapped in warm attire;
Whose sparkling glasses blush with wine
Of mirthful might and flavour fine;
Whose house, compact and strong, defies
The rigour of the angry skies!
The ruffling winds may blow their last,
And snows come driving on the blast;
And frosts their icy morsels fling,
But all within is mild as spring!

How blest is he!—blest did I say?
E'en sorrow here oft finds its way.
The senses numbed by frequent use,
Or criminal, absurd abuse

Of heaven's blessings, listless grow,
And life is but a dream of woe.

Oft fostered on the lap of ease,
Grow racking pain and foul disease,
And nervous whims, a ghastly train,
Inflicting more than corp'ral pain :
Oft gold and shining pedigree
Prove only splendid misery.
The king who sits upon his throne,
And calls the kneeling world his own,
Has oft of cares a greater load
Than he who feels his iron rod.

No state is free from care and pain
Where fiery passions get the rein,
Or soft indulgence, joined with ease,
Begets a thousand ills to tease :
Where fair Religion, heavenly maid,
Has slighted still her offered aid.
Her matchless power the will subdues,
And gives the judgment clearer views :
Denies no source of real pleasure,
And yields us blessings out of measure ;
Our prospect brightens, proves our stay,
December turns to smiling May ;
Conveys us to that peaceful shore,
By raging billows lashed no more,
Where endless happiness remains,
And one eternal summer reigns.

VERSES SENT TO A LADY ON HER BIRTHDAY

The joyous day illumes the sky
That bids each care and sorrow fly
To shades of endless night:
E'en frozen age, thawed in the fires
Of social mirth, feels young desires,
And tastes of fresh delight.

In thoughtful mood your parents dear,
Whilst joy smiles through the starting tear,
Give approbation due
As each drinks deep in mirthful wine
Your rosy health, and looks benign
Are sent to heaven for you.

But let me whisper, lovely fair,
This joy may soon give place to care,
And sorrow cloud this day;
Full soon your eyes of sparkling blue,
And velvet lips of scarlet hue,
Discoloured, may decay.

As bloody drops on virgin snows,
So vies the lily with the rose
Full on your dimpled cheek;
But ah! the worm in lazy coil
May soon prey on this putrid spoil,
Or leap in loathsome freak.

Fond wooers come with flattering tale,
And load with sighs the passing gale,
And love-distracted rave:
But hark, fair maid! whate'er they say,
You're but a breathing mass of clay,
Fast ripening for the grave.

Behold how thievish Time has been!
Full eighteen summers you have seen,
And yet they seem a day!
Whole years, collected in Time's glass,
In silent lapse how soon they pass,
And steal your life away!

The flying hour none can arrest,
Nor yet recall one moment past,
And what more dread must seem
Is, that to-morrow's not your own—
Then haste! and ere your life has flown
The subtle hours redeem.

Attend with care to what I sing:
Know time is ever on the wing;
None can its flight detain;
Then, like a pilgrim passing by,
Take home this hint, as time does fly,
'All earthly things are vain.'

Let nothing here elate your breast,
Nor, for one moment, break your rest;
In heavenly wisdom grow:
Still keep your anchor fixed above,
Where Jesus reigns in boundless love,
And streams of pleasure flow.

So shall your life glide smoothly by
Without a tear, without a sigh,
And purest joys will crown
Each birthday, as the year revolves,
Till this clay tenement dissolves,
And leaves the soul unbound.

Then shall you land on Canaan's shore,
Where time and chance shall be no more,
And joy eternal reigns;
There, mixing with the seraphs bright,
And dressed in robes of heavenly light,
You'll raise angelic strains.

THE IRISH CABIN

SHOULD poverty, modest and clean,
E'er please, when presented to view,
Should cabin on brown heath, or green,
Disclose aught engaging to you,
Should Erin's wild harp soothe the ear
When touched by such fingers as mine,
Then kindly attentive draw near,
And candidly ponder each line.

One day, when December's keen breath
Arrested the sweet running rill,
And Nature seemed frozen in death,
I thoughtfully strolled o'er the hill:
The mustering clouds wore a frown,
The mountains were covered with snow,
And Winter his mantle of brown
Had spread o'er the landscape below.

Thick rattling the footsteps were heard
Of peasants far down in the vale;
From lakes, bogs, and marshes debarred,
The wild-fowl, aloft on the gale,
Loud gabbling and screaming were borne,
Whilst thundering guns hailed the day,
And hares sought the thicket forlorn,
Or, wounded, ran over the way.

No music was heard in the grove,
  The blackbird and linnet and thrush,
And goldfinch and sweet cooing dove,
  Sat pensively mute in the bush:
The leaves that once wove a green shade
  Lay withered in heaps on the ground:
Chill Winter through grove, wood, and glade
  Spread sad desolation around.

But now the keen north wind 'gan whistle,
  And gusty, swept over the sky;
Each hair, frozen, stood like a bristle,
  And night thickened fast on the eye.
In swift-wheeling eddies the snow
  Fell, mingling and drifting amain,
And soon all distinction laid low,
  As whitening it covered the plain.

A light its pale ray faintly shot
  (The snow-flakes its splendour had shorn),
It came from a neighbouring cot,
  Some called it the Cabin of Mourne:[1]
A neat Irish Cabin, snow-proof,
  Well thatched, had a good earthen floor,
One chimney in midst of the roof,
  One window, and one latched door.

Escaped from the pitiless storm,
  I entered the humble retreat;
Compact was the building, and warm,
  Its furniture simple and neat.
And now, gentle reader, approve
  The ardour that glowed in each breast,
As kindly our cottagers strove
  To cherish and welcome their guest.

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[1] Mourne consists chiefly of a range of high mountains in the north of Ireland.

The dame nimbly rose from her wheel,
And brushed off the powdery snow:
Her daughter, forsaking the reel,
Ran briskly the cinders to blow:
The children, who sat on the hearth,
Leaped up without murmur or frown,
An oaken stool quickly brought forth,
And smilingly bade me sit down.

Whilst grateful sensations of joy
O'er all my fond bosom were poured,
Resumed was each former employ,
And gay thrifty order restored:
The blaze flickered up to the crook,
The reel clicked again by the door,
The dame turned her wheel in the nook,
And frisked the sweet babes round the floor.

Released from the toils of the barn,
His thrifty, blithe wife hailed the sire,
And hanging his flail by her yarn,
He drew up his stool to the fire;
Then smoothing his brow with his hand,
As if he would sweep away sorrow,
He says, 'Let us keep God's command,
And never take thought for the morrow.'

Brisk turning him round with a smile,
And freedom unblended by art,
And affable manners and style,
Though simple, that reached to my heart,
He said (whilst with ardour he glowed),
'Kind sir, we are poor, yet we're blest:
We're all in the steep, narrow road
That leads to the city of rest.

'’Tis true, I must toil all the day,
And oft suffer cold through the night,
Though silvered all over with grey,
And dimly declining my sight:
And sometimes our raiment and food
Are scanty—ah! scanty indeed:
But all work together for good,
So in my blest Bible I read.

'I also have seen in that Book
(Perhaps you can tell me the place?)
How God on poor sinners does look
In pity, and gives them his grace—
Yea, gives them his grace in vast store,
Sufficient to help them quite through,
Though troubles should whelm them all o'er;
And sure this sweet promise is true!

'Yes, true as the snow blows without,
And winds whistle keen through the air,
His grace can remove every doubt,
And chase the black gloom of despair:
It often supports my weak mind,
And wipes the salt tear from my eye,
It tells me that Jesus is kind,
And died for such sinners as I.

'I once rolled in wealth, without grace,
But happiness n'er was my lot,
Till Christ freely pitied my case,
And now I am blest in a cot:
Well knowing things earthly are vain,
Their troubles ne'er puzzle my head;
Convinced that to die will be gain,
I look on the grave as my bed.

'I look on the grave as my bed,
  Where I'll sleep the swift hours away,
Till waked from their slumbers, the dead
  Shall rise, never more to decay:
Then I, with my children and wife,
  Shall get a bright palace above,
And endlessly clothed with life,
  Shall dwell in the Eden of love.

'Then know, gentle stranger, though poor,
  We're cheerful, contented, and blest;
Though princes should pass by our door,
  King Jesus is ever our guest;
We feel, and we taste, and we see
  The pleasures which flow from our Lord,
And fearless, and wealthy, and free,
  We live on the joys of his word.'

He ceased: and a big tear of joy
  Rolled glittering down to the ground;
Whilst all, having dropped their employ,
  Were buried in silence profound;
A sweet, solemn pause long ensued—
  Each bosom o'erflowed with delight;
Then heavenly converse renewed,
  Beguiled the dull season of night.

We talked of the rough narrow way
  That leads to the kingdom of rest;
On Pisgah we stood to survey
  The King in his holiness dressed—
Even Jesus, the crucified King,
  Whose blood in rich crimson does flow,
Clean washing the crimson of sin,
  And rinsing it whiter than snow.[1]

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[1] Isaiah i. 18.

But later and later it's wearing,
  And supper they cheerfully bring,
The mealy potato and herring,
  And water just fresh from the spring.
They press, and they smile: we sit down;
  First praying the Father of love
Our table with blessings to crown,
  And feed us with bread from above.

The wealthy and bloated may sneer,
  And sicken o'er luxury's dishes,
And loathe the poor cottager's cheer,
  And melt in the heat of their wishes:
But luxury's sons are unblest,
  A prey to each giddy desire,
And hence, where they never know rest,
  They sink in unquenchable fire.

Not so, the poor cottager's lot,
  Who travels the Zion-ward road,
He's blest in his neat little cot,
  He's rich in the favour of God;
By faith he surmounts every wave
  That rolls on this sea of distress:
Triumphant, he dives in the grave,
  To rise in the ocean of bliss.

Now supper is o'er, and we raise
  Our prayers to the Father of light,
And joyfully hymning His praise,
  We lovingly bid a good-night.—
The ground's white, the sky's cloudless blue,
  The breeze flutters keen through the air,
The stars twinkle bright on my view,
  As I to my mansion repair.

All peace, my dear cottage, be thine!
  Nor think that I'll treat you with scorn;
Whoever reads verses of mine
  Shall hear of the Cabin of Mourne;
And had I but musical strains,
  Though humble and mean in your station,
You should smile whilst the world remains,
  The pride of the fair Irish Nation.

In friendship, fair Erin, you glow;
  Offended, you quickly forgive;
Your courage is known to each foe,
  Yet foes on your bounty might live.
Some faults you, however, must own;
  Dissensions, impetuous zeal,
And wild prodigality, grown
  Too big for your income and weal.

Ah! Erin, if you be great,
  And happy, and wealthy, and wise,
And trample your sorrows, elate,
  Contend for our cottager's prize;
So error and vice shall decay,
  And concord add bliss to renown,
And you shall gleam brighter than day,
  The gem of the fair British Crown.

◆

TO THE REV. J. GILPIN, ON HIS IMPROVED EDITION OF THE 'PILGRIM'S PROGRESS'

When, Reverend Sir, your good design,
To clothe our Pilgrim gravely fine,
And give him gentler mien and gait,
First reached my ear, his doubtful fate

With dread suspense my mind oppressed,
Awoke my fears, and broke my rest.
Yet, still, had England said, 'You're free,
Choose whom you will,' dear sir, to thee,
For dress beseeming modest worth,
I would have led our Pilgrim forth.

But when I viewed him o'er and o'er,
And scrutinised the weeds he wore,
And marked his mien and marked his gait,
And saw him trample sin, elate,
And heard him speak, though coarse and plain,
His mighty truths in nervous strain,
I could not gain my own consent
To your acknowledged good intent.

I had my fears, lest honest John,
When he beheld his polished son
(If saints aught earthly care to know),
Would take him for some Bond Street beau,
Or for that thing—it wants a name—
Devoid of truth, of sense and shame,
Which smoothes its chin and licks its lip,
And mounts the pulpit with a skip,
Then turning round its pretty face,
To smite each fair one in the place,
Relaxes half to vacant smile,
And aims with trope and polished style,
And lisp affected, to pourtray
Its silly self in colours gay—
Its fusty moral stuff t' unload,
And preach itself, and not its God.
Thus, wishing, doubting, trembling led,
I oped your book, your Pilgrim read.

As rising Phœbus lights the skies,
And fading night before him flies,

Till darkness to his cave is hurled
And golden day has gilt the world,
Nor vapour, cloud, nor mist is seen
To sully all the pure serene:
So, as I read each modest line,
Increasing light began to shine,
My cloudy fears and doubts gave way,
Till all around shone Heaven's own day.

And when I closed the book, thought I,
Should Bunyan leave his throne on high,
He'd own the kindness you have done
To Christian, his orphan son:
And smiling as once Eden smiled,
Would thus address his holy child:—

'My son, ere I removed from hence,
I spared nor labour nor expense
To gain for you the heavenly prize,
And teach you to make others wise.
But still, though inward worth was thine,
You lay a diamond in the mine:
You wanted outward polish bright
To show your pure intrinsic light.
Some knew your worth, and seized the prize,
And now are thronèd in the skies:
Whilst others swilled with folly's wine,
But trod the pearl like the swine,
In ignorance sunk in their grave,
And thence, where burning oceans lave.
Now polished bright, your native flame
And inward worth are still the same:
A flaming diamond still you glow,
In brighter hues: then cheery go—

More suited by a skilful hand
To do your father's high command:
Fit ornament for sage or clown,
Or beggar's rags, or kingly crown.

◆

THE COTTAGE MAID

Aloft on the brow of a mountain,
And hard by a clear running fountain,
In neat little cot,
Content with her lot,
Retired, there lives a sweet maiden.

Her father is dead, and her brother—
And now she alone with her mother
Will spin on her wheel,
And sow, knit, and reel,
And cheerfully work for their living.

To gossip she never will roam,
She loves, and she stays at, her home,
Unless when a neighbour
In sickness does labour,
Then, kindly, she pays her a visit.

With Bible she stands by her bed,
And when some blest passage is read,
In prayer and in praises
Her sweet voice she raises
To Him who for sinners once died.

Well versed in her Bible is she,
Her language is artless and free,
Imparting pure joy,
That never can cloy,
And smoothing the pillow of death.

To novels and plays not inclined,
Nor aught that can sully her mind ;
    Temptations may shower,—
    Unmoved as a tower,
She quenches the fiery arrows.

She dresses as plain as the lily
That modestly grows in the valley,
    And never will go
    To play, dance or show—
She calls them the engines of Satan.

With tears in her eyes she oft says,
'Away with your dances and plays !
    The ills that perplex
    The half of our sex
Are owing to you, Satan's engines.'

Released from her daily employment,
Intent upon solid enjoyment,
    Her time she won't idle,
    But reads in her Bible,
And books that divinely enlighten.

Whilst others at wake, dance, and play
Chide life's restless moments away,
    And ruin their souls—
    In pleasure she rolls,
The foretaste of heavenly joys.

Her soul is refined by her Lord,
She shines in the truths of His word :
    Each Christian grace
    Shines full in her face,
And heightens the glow of her charms.

One day as I passed o'er the mountain
She sung by a clear crystal fountain
(Nor knew I was near);
Her notes charmed my ear,
As thus she melodiously chanted :—

'Oh ! when shall we see our dear Jesus ?
His presence from poverty frees us,—
And bright from His face
The rays of His grace
Beam, purging transgression for ever !

'Oh ! when shall we see our dear Jesus ?
His presence from sorrow will ease us,
When up to the sky
With angels we fly—
Then farewell all sorrow for ever !

'Come quickly ! come quickly, Lord Jesus !
Thy presence alone can appease us ;
For aye on Thy breast
Believers shall rest,
Where blest they shall praise Thee for ever.'

Oh, had you but seen this sweet maiden !
She smiled like the flowers of Eden,
And raised to the skies
Her fond beaming eyes,
And sighed to be with her Redeemer.

Whilst thus she stood heavenly musing,
And sometimes her Bible perusing,
Came over the way,
All silvered with grey,
A crippled and aged poor woman.

Her visage was sallow and thin,
Through her rags peeped her sunburnt skin,
With sorrow oppressed,
She held to her breast
An infant, all pallid with hunger.

Half breathless by climbing the mountain,
She tremblingly stood by the fountain,
And begged that our maid
Would lend her some aid,
And pity both her and her infant.

Our maiden had nought but her earning—
Her heart with soft pity was yearning;
She drooped like a lily
Bedewed in the valley,
Whilst tears fell in pearly showers.

With air unaffected and winning,
To cover them, of her own spinning,
Her apron of blue,
Though handsome and new,
She gave, and led them to her cottage.

All peace, my dear maiden, be thine:
Your manners and looks are divine;
On earth you shall rest,
In heaven be blest,
And shine like an angel for ever.

More blest than the king on the throne
Is he who shall call you his own!
The ruby, with you
Compared, fades to blue—
Its price is but dust on the balance.[1]

---

[1] Proverbs xxxi. 10.

Religion makes beauty enchanting,
And even where beauty is wanting,
The temper and mind,
Religion-refined,
Will shine through the veil with sweet lustre.

THE SPIDER AND THE FLY

The sun shines bright, the morning's fair,
The gossamers[1] float on the air,
The dew-gems twinkle in the glare,
The spider's loom
Is closely plied, with artful care,
Even in my room.

See how she moves in zigzag line,
And draws along her silken twine,
Too soft for touch, for sight too fine,
Nicely cementing:
And makes her polished drapery shine,
The edge indenting.

Her silken ware is gaily spread,
And now she weaves herself a bed,
Where, hiding all but just her head,
She watching lies
For moths or gnats, entangled spread,
Or buzzing flies.

You cunning pest! why, forward, dare
So near to lay your bloody snare!
But you to kingly courts repair
With fell design,
And spread with kindred courtiers there
Entangling twine.[2]

---

[1] Gossamers are the fine down of plants or the slender threads of insects, which are frequently seen to glide through the sunny atmosphere.

[2] Proverbs xxx. 28.

Ah, silly fly! will you advance?
I see you in the sunbeam dance:
Attracted by the silken glance
In that dread loom;
Or blindly led, by fatal chance,
To meet your doom.

Ah! think not, 'tis the velvet flue
Of hare, or rabbit, tempts your view;
Or silken threads of dazzling hue,
To ease your wing,
The foaming savage, couched for you,
Is on the spring.

Entangled! freed!—and yet again
You touch! 'tis o'er—that plaintive strain,
That mournful buzz, that struggle vain,
Proclaim your doom:
Up to the murderous den you're ta'en,
Your bloody tomb!

So thoughtless youths will trifling play
With dangers on their giddy way,
Or madly err in open day
Through passions fell,
And fall, though warned oft, a prey
To death and hell!

But hark! the fluttering leafy trees
Proclaim the gently swelling breeze,
Whilst through my window, by degrees,
Its breathings play:
The spider's web, all tattered flees,
Like thought, away.

Thus worldlings lean on broken props,
And idly weave their cobweb-hopes,
And hang o'er hell by spider's ropes,
Whilst sins enthral;
Affliction blows—their joy elopes—
And down they fall![1]

* * *

EPISTLE TO A YOUNG CLERGYMAN

'Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.'—2 Tim. ii. 15.

My youthful brother, oft I long
To write to you in prose or song;
With no pretence to judgment strong,
But warm affection—
May truest friendship rivet long
Our close connection!

With deference, what I impart
Receive with humble grateful heart,
Nor proudly from my counsel start,
I only lend it—
A friend ne'er aims a poisoned dart—
He wounds, to mend it.

A graduate you've just been made,
And lately passed the Mitred Head;
I trust, by the Blest Spirit, led,
And Shepherd's care:
And not a wolf, in sheepskin clad,
As numbers are.

[1] Job viii. 13, 14.

The greatest office you sustain
For love of souls, and not of gain:
Through your neglect should one be slain,
The Scriptures say,
Your careless hands his blood will stain,
On the Last Day.

But if pure truths, like virgin snows,
You loud proclaim, to friends and foes,
Consoling these, deterring those—
To heaven you'll fly;
Though stubborn sinners still oppose,
And graceless die.[1]

Divide the word of truth aright,
Show Jesus in a saving light,
Proclaim to all they're dead outright
Till Grace restore them: [2]
The great Redeemer, full in sight,
Keep still before them.

Dare not, like some, to mince the matter
Nor dazzling tropes and figures scatter,
Nor coarsely speak nor basely flatter,
Nor grovelling go:
But let plain truths, as Life's pure water,
Pellucid flow.

The sinner level with the dead,
The Lamb exalt, the Church's Head,
His holiness, adoring spread,
With godly zeal;
Enforce, though sinless, how he bled
For sinners' weal.

---

[1] Ezekiel xxxiii. 8, 9.

[2] Ephes. ii. 1–8.

Pourtray how God in thunder spoke
His fiery Law, whilst curling smoke,
In terror fierce, from Sinai broke,
    Midst raging flame!
Then Jesu's milder blood invoke,
    And preach His name.

Remember still to fear the Lord,
To live, as well as preach, His word,
And wield the Gospel's two-edged sword,
    Though dangers lower—
Example only can afford
    To precept power.

And dress nor slovenly nor gay,
Nor sternly act, nor trifling play;
Still keep the golden middle way
    Whate'er betide you;
And ne'er through giddy pleasures stray,
    Though fools deride you.

As wily serpent ever prove,
Yet harmless as the turtle-dove,
Still winning souls by guileful love
    And deep invention—
So once the great Apostle strove
    With good intention.[1]

And inly to thyself take heed,
Oft prove your heart, its pages read,—
Self-knowledge will, in time of need,
    Your wants supply;
Who knows himself, from danger's freed,
    Where'er he lie.

---

[1] St. Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 16.

So God will own the labours done,
Approving see His honoured Son,
And honoured Law ; and numbers won
Of souls immortal,
Through grace, will onward conquering run
To heaven's bright portal.

And on that last and greatest day,
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
A perfect band, in bright array,
Will form your crown,
Your joys triumphant wide display,
And sorrows drown.

And now farewell, my youthful friend—
Excuse these lines, in candour penned ;
To me as freely counsel lend,
With zeal as fervent—
For you will pray, till life does end,
Your humble servant.

EPISTLE TO THE LABOURING POOR

All you who turn the sturdy soil,
Or ply the loom with daily toil,
And lowly on through life turmoil
For scanty fare,
Attend, and gather richest spoil
To soothe your care.

I write with tender, feeling heart—
Then kindly read what I impart;
'Tis freely penned, devoid of art,
In homely style,
'Tis meant to ward off Satan's dart,
And show his guile.

I write to ope your sin-closed eyes,
And make you great, and rich, and wise,
And give you peace when trials rise,
And sorrows gloom;
I write to fit you for the skies
On Day of Doom.

What, though you dwell in lowly cot,
And share through life a humble lot?
Some thousands wealth and fame have got,
Yet know no rest:
They build, pull down, and scheme and plot,
And die unblest.

Your mean attire and scanty fare
Are, doubtless, springs of bitter care—
Expose you blushing, trembling, bare,
To haughty scorn;
Yet murmur not in black despair,
Nor weep forlorn.

You see that lordling glittering ride,
In all the pomp of wealth and pride,
With lady lolling at his side,
And train attendant:
'Tis all, when felt and fairly tried,
But care resplendent.

As riches grow his wants increase,
His passions burn and gnaw his peace,
Ambition foams like raging seas
And breaks the rein,
Excess produces pale disease
And racking pain.

Compared with him thrice happy you;
Though small your stock your wants are few—
Each wild desire your toils subdue,
And sweeten rest,
Remove all fancied ills from view,
And calm your breast.

Your labours give the coarsest food
A relish sweet and cleanse the blood,
Make cheerful health in spring-tide flood
Incessant boil,
And seldom restless thoughts obtrude
On daily toil.

Those relish least who proudly own
Rich groves and parks familiar grown;
The gazing stranger passing on
Enjoys them most—
The toy possessed—the pleasure's flown,
For ever lost!

Then grateful let each murmur die,
And joyous wipe the tearful eye:
Erect a palace in the sky—
Be rich in grace:
Loathe this vain world, and longing sigh
For Jesu's face.

Both rich and poor, who serve not God,
But live in sin, averse to good,
Rejecting Christ's atoning blood,
Midst hellish shoals,
Shall welter in that fiery flood,
Which hissing rolls.

But all who worship God aright,
In Christ His Son and image bright,
With minds illumed by Gospel light,
Shall find the way
That leads to bliss, and take their flight
To heavenly day.

There rich and poor, and high and low,
Nor sin, nor pain, nor sorrow know:
There Christ with one eternal glow
Gives life and light—
There streams of pleasure ever flow,
And pure delight.

Christ says to all with sin oppressed,
'Come here, and taste of heavenly rest,
Receive Me as your friendly guest
Into your cots;
In Me you shall be rich and blest,
Though mean your lots.

'Behold my hands, my feet, my side,
All crimsoned with the bloody tide!
For you I wept, and bled, and died,
And rose again:
And thronèd at my Father's side,
Now plead amain!

'Repent, and enter Mercy's door,
And though you dwell in cots obscure,
All guilty, ragged, hungry, poor,
I give in love
A crown of gold, and pardon sure,
To each above.'

Then hear the kind, inviting voice—
Believing in the Lord rejoice;
Your souls will hymn the happy choice
To God on high,
Whilst joyful angels swell the noise
Throughout the sky.

A fond farewell!—each cottage friend,
To Jesu's love I would commend
Your souls and bodies, to the end
Of life's rough way;
Then (death subdued) may you ascend
To endless day!

◆

THE COTTAGER'S HYMN

I

My food is but spare,
And humble my cot,
Yet Jesus dwells there
And blesses my lot:
Though thinly I'm clad,
And tempests oft roll,
He's raiment, and bread,
And drink to my soul.

II

His presence is wealth,
His grace is a treasure,
His promise is health
And joy out of measure.
His word is my rest,
His spirit my guide:
In Him I am blest
Whatever betide.

III

Since Jesus is mine,
  Adieu to all sorrow ;
I ne'er shall repine,
  Nor think of to-morrow :
The lily so fair,
  And raven so black,
He nurses with care,
  Then how shall I lack ?

IV

Each promise is sure,
  That shines in His word,
And tells me, though poor,
  I'm rich in my Lord.
Hence ! Sorrow and Fear !
  Since Jesus is nigh,
I'll dry up each tear
  And stifle each sigh.

V

Though prince, duke, or lord,
  Ne'er enter my shed,
King Jesus my board
  With dainties does spread.
Since He is my guest,
  For joy I shall sing,
And ever be blest
  In Jesus my King.

VI

With horrible din
  Afflictions may swell,—
They cleanse me from sin,
  They save me from hell :

They're all but the rod
  Of Jesus, in love;
They lead me to God
  And blessings above.

VII

Through sickness and pain
  I flee to my Lord,
Sweet comfort to gain,
  And health from His word;
Bleak scarcities raise
  A keener desire,
To feed on His grace,
  And wear His attire.

VIII

The trials which frown,
  Applied by His blood,
But plait me a crown,
  And work for my good.
In praise I shall tell,
  When throned in my rest,
The things which befell
  Were always the best.

IX

Whatever is hid
  Shall burst on my sight
When hence I have fled
  To glorious light.
Should chastisements lower,
  Then let me resign;
Should kindnesses shower,
  Let gratitude shine.

X

Hence! Sorrow and Fear!
Since Jesus is nigh,
I'll dry up each tear,
And stifle each sigh:
And clothed in His word
Will conquer my foes,
And follow my Lord
Wherever He goes.

XI

My friends! let us fly
To Jesus our King;
And still as we hie,
Of grace let us sing.
Through pleasure and pain,
If faithful we prove,
For cots we shall gain
A palace above.

THE END

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